

An Eclipse of Memory



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New York

AN ECLIPSE 1902.
OF MEMORY

A NOVEL

BY
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AN ECLIPSE OF MEMORY.

CHAPTER I.

JACK OSWALD was swearing gently at his white tie, which declined to come together properly. His rooms at the Beaverwyck were very comfortable without being luxurious. Their arrangement showed a cosmopolitan taste and gave evidence of foreign travel. Family pictures were mingled with those of footlight favourites. Over the divan hung a Turkish canopy surrounded with odds and ends of weapons from divers lands: An assegai from South Africa with an axe from Lapland. A Japanese scimitar crossed a modern cavalry sword, and groups of firearms were arranged on either side of the fireplace. An Arabesque stand, with brass tray, held an outfit for making Turkish coffee, and on the side-table was a miscellaneous assortment of pipes. A Chibouque from Constantinople, an opium pipe from the Orient, and a Nargileh from the banks of the Nile. All around and about were evidences of bachelor carelessness regarding general arrangements and clothes.

Jack Oswald was what in common parlance is called a man about town, and his life was that of many men of means and education. His father had left him a generous fortune. His mother had died when he was a child. Oswald had graduated from Yale, and at college was counted among the most popular men. He had sung on the Glee Club, had been one of the Junior Prom. Committee and played tennis and golf above the average. He had made a senior society, and we find him four years after graduation a member of the brokerage firm of Oswald & Van Beuren. In the morning he would appear at the office at a quarter before ten, go to the Exchange for the opening and to execute his orders, at one o'clock he would go to the Down Town Club, take lunch with Ernest Balford or his partner, and after the board closed would either walk up town or take the elevated road to Twenty-third Street, thence stroll through Madison Square to his Club. A drink or two, with a game of backgammon or pool, brought the dressing hour and dinner.

Oswald dined out four or five nights in a week, as, owing to his bright and cheerful disposition and attractive personality, he was a general favourite and in great demand. When he was free from engagements he would dine at the Club, go to the theatre with Van or Balford and afterwards come back for a night cap and few or many games of backgammon. This was his scheme of life at the age of

twenty-six, when we take up the story. Some months before the story opens, Oswald had met, for the first time at a dinner dance at the Anson Jones, a *débutante* of the year before, Clare Lawrence. She was at the time but nineteen years of age, but had the repose and self poise of an older woman. Mrs. Lawrence, her mother, was a widow, and from both her husband and her father had inherited a fortune sufficiently ample to enable her to educate her only child in a most liberal way. Since girlhood, Clare had been in French, German and English schools abroad. She had studied voice culture with Marchesi and drawing and painting in Julian's studio in Paris. Educationally, she was well rounded and a desirable catch from a material point of view. Oswald was insensibly attracted toward her from the first, and she was mildly interested in him. As she had only returned to America the year before, after eight years absence, she knew nothing of him excepting that he was widely popular, well born and educated and possessed, to a marked degree, of what is ambiguously called personal magnetism. That he had an income did not figure at all in her estimate of the man.

He had from the first called regularly at the Lawrence home in Forty-eighth Street. Of late his calls had been quite frequent and a natural friendship, approaching *tendresse*, had gradually developed. He was falling in love, without realising it,

and she was, in the same way, becoming more dependent on him.

Jack stood before the mirror and talked to the reflection—

“You’re wasting your life, old man, you know you are, and why do you do it? What good purpose are you accomplishing? You must brace up and develop what is in you. It ought not to be a hard task.”

He was still talking to himself and, having completed his toilet, had turned to his parlour to light a cigarette, when a loud knock at his door broke up his reveries.

“Come in.”

“How are you, Jack? I dropped in to see if you would make the fourth in a *partie carré* to-night. I have two seats at the Empire and have asked Kitty to join us for supper after the show. I saw her on Broadway and she says you never come near her any more. What’s up? Kitty is making a big hit and if I am not mistaken she won’t play *soubrette* parts long.”

“I can’t do it, Ernest; I am dining at the Lawrences.”

“Can’t you join us afterwards? You told me yesterday that you were going to dine at the Club to-night. I have asked Alice to make the square.”

“I forgot about the dinner when I said that, but I don’t think I had better join you.”

“Look here, Jack, what’s the matter with you

lately? You are not going back on the old guard, are you? We are old pals. Are you really in the toils?"

"Toils nothing. I like the family very much, dinner's good and all that, but besides, Ernest, Kitty St. Clair and I are not as good friends as we were,—some little row—and I haven't seen nor called on her for some time."

"I knew something must be up, but it's none of my business. I'll tell you one thing, however, you are falling in love, and, like the old ostrich, you think no one sees it."

"I don't think I am."

"Yes, you are, and I'll bet an old hat you will be engaged inside of three weeks."

"Have a drink, Ernest, I'm late."

"Thanks, I'll take a peg. Awfully sorry you can't come, though."

"Help yourself," and Oswald opened the door in his sideboard, disclosing a miniature bar.

A few moments later he jumped on a Broadway car and was hurried up town.

Ten days before the night in question, Miss Lawrence and her mother had gone to Washington on a week's visit, and Oswald, after a day or so, making the excuse of seeing a Congressman customer, had followed them, and, naturally enough, spent his two days at the Arlington, where the Lawrences were stopping. Had the opportunity offered, he would then have asked Clare to become

his wife, but the constant presence of *Madame Mère* had made this impossible. Mrs. Lawrence liked Oswald immensely, but thought Clare too young to think of marriage at present.

To-night Oswald entered the drawing-room a good ten minutes ahead of time, and a very charming picture presented itself as the young lady of the house laid aside her book and rose to greet him. She was looking remarkably well. Her gown was of white crêpe de Chine, which showed to the best advantage her shapely figure. Her hair, full of soft waves, was worn *à la* Madonna and, in the light of the room, had a golden-brown sheen. Her eyes were violet and spoke more of a welcome than she knew as she said in her low musical voice: "I am so glad you could come, Mr. Oswald."

"But I am outrageously early, am I not?" answered Oswald, looking about.

"No, only a few minutes. I hope it won't prove a *mauvais quartre d'heure*. How have you been?"

"Oh, the same old routine, office, club, dinner and bed. I am getting sick of it all; I hope I am not getting blasé, at my age. And how did you enjoy your visit, Miss Clare?"

"We had a lovely time: dinners with diplomats, receptions at Senators' houses and a lot of that kind of thing. I met some charming men, mostly officers of the army and navy and foreign attachés, but I missed my New York friends and am glad to get back. We had a rather unpleasant experience a

few days since, which quite upset dear Mamma. I was to tell no one, but you are such an old friend, that I shall risk Mamma's displeasure if you will promise never to breathe it."

"I swear," smiled Oswald; "and I wager it's about some man."

"It is," said Clare; "but I know you couldn't guess it, and, if I tell it at all, I must hurry, for Mamma will be down in a moment and our other guests will be here."

"Hurry, then; I am all ears and curiosity."

"Let me see, it was last Tuesday night. We went to a ball at the German Embassy, and, among others, I was presented to a young and decidedly handsome German Baron, one of the attachés. During the evening I saw a great deal of the Baron. We talked in German and walked through the conservatory and I saw scarcely any other men. Before going, he asked if he might call. I introduced him to Mamma. On the following afternoon what was our surprise to receive his card, sent to our parlour, requesting an interview with Mrs. Lawrence. Mamma went in to see him. He at once broached the subject of marrying *me*, and said that he would take me for ten thousand a year, though his figure had always been fifteen. Wasn't that a compliment! What did Mamma do? She rose to flights of eloquence I never dreamed she possessed; I could hear her in my room. My poor, lost Baron did not speak English well, but I feel sure that the

'How dare you's' and 'What do you means' were more than half understood. He bowed himself out rather precipitately and Mamma half shrieked, half moaned for me to come to her. I laughed until I cried, but Mamma's indignation has not yet worn off. What do you think of the story?"

"The beastly little upstart! Clare, I mean Miss Lawrence, you wouldn't think of marrying for a title, would you? You will marry some true American, won't you, dear, Clare, I——"

"Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Jones," announced the butler in pompous tones. . . .

As Jack Oswald walked down the avenue three hours later twirling his stick and humming one of his favourite songs, he felt himself a new man. Shadows temporary and fleeting would obtrude themselves, but he ignored them and murmured to himself, "She loves me, she loves me." He didn't notice the light rain which had begun falling and pattered on the crown of his silk hat. "She loves me, she loves me," was the refrain the tiny drops seemed to sing, as he entered the warm confines of the club and asked the man at the door if Mr. Van Beuren was in the building.

"Mr. Van Beuren is in the café, sir." He strolled in and joined a party of four, two of whom were engrossed in a game of backgammon. Van Beuren was looking on and greeted Oswald with a "Hello, Jack, you look as though you had just come from

the Klondyke, with a bushel of nuggets. What's happened?"

"Nothing, old man; I feel quite fit to-night, that's all, I suppose."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, and hope it will last. We've been worrying about you lately; thought Kitty had given you your *congé* or something equally serious."

For a moment a cloud passed over Oswald's face, but he forgot it in an instant and gave his order and entered into a good-natured argument with Charlie Haswell about the respective merits of the Yale and Harvard football teams. Finally Balford said:

"Have you heard about the nasty little affair in the club this evening, Jack?"

"No, what was it?"

"Why—you tell it, Van, I'm playing."

"Well," said Van, "Charlie West and Fred Jones were in a crowd of four or five taking a smile, when Charlie said: 'Fred, who in the deuce were those champagne blondes and things you had in the box at the Casino last evening; you ought to be more careful.' Fred reddened and a second after called West a dirty blackguard. In an instant blows were exchanged, and, in another, they were separated and both sorry, but a number of members overheard the remark and saw the trouble, and the end is yet to come. They will be disciplined in some way. I hope it won't get out."

"By Jove, how unfortunate," said Oswald.

"Yes, but the worst of it was, that it seems Fred had a kind of family party with him, out-of-towners, you know, including his sister, and he was blowing them off to an evening's amusement."

"Well, boys, I am going to turn in, I'm tired," and Oswald left the party and club. "She loves me, she loves me," sang the drops as he walked to his rooms, but the shadows would obtrude.

Oswald's character was a complex one. Up to his college days his life had been uneventful. Brought up in an atmosphere of refinement, his tastes were clean and healthy and his sense of right and wrong clearly defined. As a boy he passionately loved to go into the woods and fields and study the birds and flowers. This taste for natural history and nature had early developed and had been fostered by his father, who owned a large farm within easy access to the city and where young Jack spent all his vacations. He went to college earlier than most boys, having prepared under private tutors. Herein lay the source of subsequent weaknesses. He was a follower rather than a leader, and, when thrown in with groups of boys prepared together at St. Pauls, Andover or Groton, and in most cases older than himself, he found himself in that deplorable position of being always unable to say "No." His unusual amiability and evenness of temper contributed to increase this weakness, and, whereas he was universally liked,

the respect he got from his classmates was tempered by the knowledge of his failing. While not accomplished, yet he could do many things fairly well. Without working hard, he could keep up with his class, he was a fair athlete and had played as substitute on the University eleven. He had a clear but untrained baritone voice, a voice with tears in it, as some one once said.

He felt that he could do something creditable, but he also knew that he never would, yet he had perseverance and determination enough, and when once fixed in an idea, good or bad, would stick to it in face of all opposition. What he thought was true could never be proved otherwise, by friend or foe, on any evidence except the evidence of his own ears or eyes. He was hail fellow with every one, as much with the policeman on his beat as with the club friend with whom he took his cocktail. With women he was always a favourite. Polite and attentive, he seemed to take an interest in even the most trivial affairs that interested them, and they instinctively made of him a friend with whom barriers of conventionality were shortly broken down. He was a combination of generosity and selfishness. Of money he knew not the value. If he saw a thing he wanted, or that some one else wanted, and had the money, he would buy it. If any one stopped him on the street with the usual tale of poverty and woe, his hand would instinctively go to his pocket. Even when his father was giving him

a generous allowance, he was always without funds, always coming for a little more and unable to account for the money gone. He was selfish only in his stubbornness. It was almost impossible for him to give up an idea once fixed ; regardless of how he might bring distress to others, he clung to it until he knew himself wrong. Whereas his obstinacy was dogged and brought an "ounce of pleasure with a pound of pain," it sometimes worked the other way.

An example of this was shown once, when, in face of circumstantial evidence which had convicted a poor devil accused of petit larceny, he befriended him, taking the man's word against all testimony and followed the case with his time and money to an upper court, before reaching which the real culprit was discovered, confessed and sentenced.

This was Oswald's character at the time he became engaged to Clare Lawrence. She had the pure, unselfish, trusting character of a good woman. He was a man of average acquirements and considered an all-round good fellow.

CHAPTER II.

“MARGARET, hurry up, you will not be ready in time and I am so anxious to see how Miss Lawrence walks down the aisle, the girl who has had no experience in life or society.”

The speaker was Mrs. Anson Jones, the wife of a wealthy stock broker living on Fiftieth Street. Her conversation was addressed to her daughter. Margaret Jones was standing in the middle of her dainty boudoir. She was the spoiled child of the fortune which all her surroundings betrayed. Artistic to a degree, her little den was filled with works of art and bric-a-brac from all parts of the world. The daintiest piece of Dresden china in the collection, however, was Margaret herself, with her soft, dreamy, blue eyes, and little golden curls all over her mignon head. Then her maid handed her the parasol, which was the last touch of perfection to her charming costume, and she started to walk languidly to the adjoining room. Margaret could never do anything in a hurry. Together she and Mrs. Anson Jones passed down the stairs and entered the well-appointed brougham at the door. “Drive as quickly as possible to St. Thomas’s Church,” said the mother, elaborately settling her flounces as she spoke.

It was just twelve o'clock and the neighbouring bells were clanging out the noon hour. Lines of rosy-faced school-girls were hurrying home to lunch, and the poor, dilapidated stages, relics of former generations, went toiling by. Upon reaching the church they pushed a hurried way through the crowd of sight-seers on the pavement and were met at the door by Ernest Balford, one of the ushers.

"You are awfully late, and I couldn't save the good places I had promised, but here is a corner where you can see something of the bridal procession."

At that moment the organ started the beautiful Lohengrin wedding march. On the minute, the wedding party started up the aisle. First came the ushers, then the bridesmaids, many of them making their first bow into society at the first great event of the season. A hushed murmur ran through the church as the bride appeared. How could a girl so young walk, on such an occasion, with such self-possession and grace? Her breeding was shown in every movement of her supple form. Her large eyes looked with innocence straight ahead, and all her movements and expression betrayed the unconsciousness of untarnished girlhood. Oswald met her at the altar and, after a few short minutes, they passed down the aisle, arm in arm, man and wife.

The Lawrence home was resplendent in its floral

array of roses, chrysanthemums and autumn leaves, and the reception was attended by every one in New York worth knowing. At three o'clock the bride and groom disappeared up the avenue in the Lawrence carriage with the usual accompaniment of rice and slippers and with destination unknown. . . .

Four months had passed. Jack Oswald and his bride spent a three weeks' honeymoon at Washington, the Hot Springs of Virginia and Fortress Monroe—three very happy weeks. Everything was forgotten save that they were together trusting and trusted. Only once did a little cloud appear. They had been walking on the long stretch of sand at Fortress Monroe. The day was one of those heavenly autumn afternoons, neither too hot nor cold, best expressed by mellow. Behind them were the woods and fields in their gorgeous dress of many colours, in front, the blue waters of the ocean stretched in limitless perspective, dancing and rippling in the sunlight.

They had seated themselves on a bit of old wreckage, the silent witness of some bygone tragedy, perhaps.

"Isn't it lovely, Jack?"

"Lovely, dear."

"Do you remember, Jack, in one of the old *Punch's*, the picture of Angelina and Augustus?"

"No, dear, what was it?"

"Why, don't you remember? Angelina and Augustus were on their honeymoon and on the

sands at Étretat, or Trouville or somewhere. Angelina said: 'Oh, I wish some friend would come along.' 'Yes,' replied Augustus, yawning, 'or even an enemy.'"

Oswald smiled. "No, Clare," he answered, "for my part I am enjoying every minute of our trip, aren't you?"

"Yes, Jack—Jack, it's strange how little, how almost nothing, I know of your past life. You know of my school days in Dresden and Paris, they were very pleasant, as I look back, but my life only really began a year and a half ago when I came back and met you. Some day you must—why, Jack, what's the matter, do you know either of those people? What a horrid, vindictive face she has. Surely you don't know her or that common-looking man with her!"

"No, no, I don't, Clare, that is, I used to know something about her. She is a very ordinary woman from New York."

"But, Jack, darling, you grew actually pale when you first saw her."

"No, I didn't, Clare; it was your imagination. Now let the matter drop, and let us go back to the hotel."

"I wonder what she is doing down here, Jack?"

"Clare, if you don't let the matter drop I shall be angry."

"I am sorry, dear; I did not mean to annoy you."

They walked along in silence, Jack cursing the

chance that had brought Kitty St. Clair to Fortress Monroe at this time. How much trouble was she going to make for him?

Meanwhile Clare, with dry tears in her eyes and a heavy heart, walked by his side. That a vague something had, even now, come between them she felt keenly, though she could not analyse her feelings. Only one thing she knew—Jack had spoken crossly to her. What had she done? Yes, it was her fault; she had been too curious and had annoyed him.

“I’m sorry, Jack,” she said again.

“No, dearest, don’t say that. I was a little quick and I apologise.”

“How horrid it is to be anything but the best of chums, isn’t it, Jack? I can understand now how horrible loveless marriages must be.”

They reached the hotel at dusk and went at once to dress for dinner, that is, Clare did, while her husband promised that he would follow her in a few minutes. He went directly to the register and there, sure enough, in her clear masculine hand he read: “Kitty St. Clair, New York City.” He went to the bar, had a cocktail, lit a cigarette and strolled out on the walk. Two figures were approaching, and, as they neared him, he recognised Kitty and her escort. He touched his hat as he passed, but heard his name called, as he did so, and turning, met Kitty, who had for a moment left her companion.

“That was a very cordial greeting from an old

friend, Mr. Oswald," said Kitty in her low, attractive voice.

"Well, Kitty, I did not know the gentleman."

"No, and you wish you hadn't known me. See here, Jack Oswald, do you think you have acted the honourable gentleman towards me, you who put honour and uprightness on so high a level. You know what I told you before you left me. I am not done with you yet. Good-evening."

Oswald stood looking after the retreating figure.

"A woman scorned" he thought to himself. Yet he had not scorned her, he had been her best and most generous friend, it seemed to him as he thought it over.

In a most unhappy frame of mind he walked to the hotel again and went to his rooms.

Four months had passed since on that golden October day in the flower-embowered church in the largest city in the land, and in the presence of the best people of that city, Jack Oswald had promised everything to the girl whom he called wife. Perhaps he should have laid bare the pages of his past life to the young girl before he took her to the altar. Yet how could he? How can nine out of ten men? He was no moralist. He was rather a sophist. He thought he was a gentleman in the highest sense of the term. Perhaps he was, perhaps he was not. At any rate, he came back from his honeymoon, and, after two weeks' visit with Clare's mother, they moved into their cosy little house in

Thirty-second St., where they were to spend the Winter.

During the day time Jack was down town attending to the not very onerous business of the firm of Oswald & Van Beuren, and in the afternoon he would follow his ante-marital habit of going to the club at four-thirty or five to see his friends, and play whist or backgammon for awhile. At first Clare would frequently meet him at Tenth Street or below and walk with him to their home, where he would leave her and run over to his beloved club. She never complained. She even urged him to go out of an evening when they had no engagements. She wished to give her husband the fullest liberty. She reasoned, perhaps fallaciously, that she must not expect him to give up all his past habits and life, that he would love her more if she never made requirements of him but simply made his small home so cheerful and attractive that he would, by preference, remain at her side. She was too large hearted and unselfish to consider for a moment what *she* had given up for this man, what every woman gives up when she blots out all her previous life, and in a moment takes up the new and untried one. A lottery? Yes, and with the odds much in favour of *Monsieur le Diable*.

"Do you want to go anywhere this evening, Clare," said Jack one evening, looking up from his paper just before dinner.

Clare sat at the piano running her fingers softly

over the keys and recalling her girlhood days in some half-remembered melody.

"No, Jack, perhaps we can stay at home to-night and have a really homey evening."

"Oh, all right, dear, but I want to run over to the club to see Charlie Haswell for a minute about half past nine."

An inaudible sigh, a little tearful sob, was suppressed almost before she knew she felt it, and Clare answered cheerfully,

"All right, Jack, dear."

After dinner, at which Jack tried to make himself unusually agreeable, he threw himself on the divan and Clare, seating herself at the piano, played for an hour. She played the things Jack loved best, "Narcissus," "Omon Fernand" and bits from Chopin and Mozart, ending with one of Jack's especial pets, the "Marche Funèbre" of Chopin.

Jack puffed his cigar languidly and thought about the coming trip in the club car to the football game and was as comfortable as possible. He did not know how happy he was. Like many men he took many things for granted. He loved his wife very dearly, but he never knew or thought how many times daily Clare said to herself:

"Why does he not *say* so, I am hungering and thirsting for it? Why does he not tell me that he loves me better than any one, or anything, in this great world?"

"Well, little girl, I'll be back shortly," and with

a light kiss Jack was off to the club. At a quarter past one in the morning he came in to find Clare seated in her little boudoir. Dressed only in her light blue dressing gown, and with her hair in a single braid, she looked sweet and girlish. The delicate odour of violets was about the room and the beautiful face looked up happily as he entered.

"Why, Clare," cried her husband, "why in the world didn't you go to bed? I am sorry I am so late, but I got into a game, and had no idea how the time was going."

"It's all right, Jack, now you are here. I was getting a little anxious, you know, and I can't sleep until you come home. Did you have a good time?"

"No, not very, I lost five dollars at backgammon. By the way, Clare," he added, "I have a fine chance to go duck shooting. George Cornell has asked me to go down to Havre de Grace with him. They have a club on an island called Spesutia, or some name like that; fine shooting, they say."

"Well, you must go, dear, of course."

"No, I told him I didn't see how I could leave you."

"Why, of course you must go, Jack. I can go to stay with mother, or she can come to me."

"You are the dearest, most unselfish thing in the world, Clare. I really would like to go if I could arrange it."

"Why, you *must* go, Jack; and think how fine it

will be when you bring back a lot of canvas-backs. . . ."

On the following Tuesday, therefore, after an affectionate farewell, Oswald left by the two o'clock train with gun and ammunition for a week on the Chesapeake, having arranged that Mrs. Lawrence was to come to spend the nights with Clare. Clare's mother was a woman of the world. Thrown on her own resources after the death of her husband, she had learned to look on the world as it is, and while being a sympathetic and womanly woman, she had a large gift, latent until called into use, of common sense. She had tried to counsel Clare before her marriage as to many of the frailties and foibles of mankind, and had, since that event, talked to her in what she thought the best way. But the daughter possessed an innate reserve, which made it impossible for her to do more than listen. Life in certain of its aspects had been an unturned leaf to her before her marriage and her pride kept her from saying anything after her new life had begun. She would simply say to her mother that she was very happy, that was all. At the ferry Jack met George Cornell and they crossed and boarded the Washington Express. Just after dusk they hurried off the train at Havre de Grace, where the captain of the small club steamer met them.

"Hello, Captain."

"How d'ye do, Mr. Cornell."

"Captain Smith, this is Mr. Oswald. What's the prospect?"

"Very good, Mr. Cornell; the ducks are 'trading' in and out of the inlet and you can't drive them off the places where we dumped the corn, no, not with a club."

"Good enough; then we ought to have some sport."

"You'll have sport enough, and ducks enough, if you can hit 'em."

"Well, we'll try. Mr. Oswald is good on everything else and I imagine he can twist the ducks all right. Black-heads, I suppose, mostly, aren't they?"

"Yes, sir, with a sprinkling of red-heads and now and then a canvas-back. The canvas-backs are mostly on the flats, though."

In a half hour the boat brought up at the little pier and a few steps took the party to the commodious club house. There they met two other members; Cornell knew them and introductions followed. They had been down for the shooting the day before, and had made a good record of seventy-six ducks. Dinner was presided over by Auntie Ruth and a sable assistant, and, after a pipe was smoked before the blazing logs of the open fireplace, the party broke up to be called at four-thirty the next morning. Lots had been drawn for position and Oswald and Cornell, who were to shoot from one blind, drew Land's Cove as their station.

Buckwheat cakes and home-made sausages, with a

steaming cup of coffee, made a good beginning for the day's pleasures, and long before light, Jim, the faithful darkey, was rowing the men to their positions.

Arrived at the blind, a floating one, the men, guns and ammunition were transferred and Jim began the arduous task of putting out the decoys, about three hundred in number. Before this was completed, the grey dawn was breaking. Way off to the Eastward the sky was tinged with pink. "Down," whispered Cornell, and then both men lay flat, as, with a thunderous whirr of wings, a flock of thirty odd black-heads checked themselves and attempted to turn off. They had seen the stools and had come in almost over Jim's head, as he was hard at work in the icy waters. The guns belched fire in the dusky dawn but only one duck fell.

"I was rattled, weren't you, Jack?"

"Yes, they came so suddenly, I shot at a shadow."

The sky had changed now to crimson and gold, and the sun was tipping the trees on the shore.

"It's going to be an ideal day, Jack, cloudy and the wind just right."

"Why, there's no wind and the sun is rising clear."

"Yes, but don't you notice those clouds just forming? After a half hour we won't see the sun again, I'll lay anything."

Jim had finished "putting out" and had gone way below to the shore. There he sat in his boat

ready to gather dead birds or shoot cripples. The day came on apparently all at once, and suddenly the air seemed filled with ducks, "trading" in and out, the beautiful canvas-back shooting high overhead in serried column. The birds coming on in groups of from ten to forty decoyed well. Jack was doing excellent work and Cornell was only a few behind. Both kept tally on the boarded sides of the blind. Soon the flocks were broken up, and then the real sport began, as the birds came in two's and three's or singly. Now and again a flock of pintails would shoot by overhead and entice a shot, while the turkey buzzards far over on the land, circling and wheeling with outstretched wings, would rise or fall at will without seeming muscular movement. It was interesting to watch Jim, who was kept busy chasing wounded ducks all over the bay. He was an old hand at this work. He would row rapidly toward the wounded bird and, as it dove, would pull hard for a moment, and then, dropping his oars, would seize his gun and, standing, rotate his body from one side to the other with gun at shoulder. The barrels covered the arc of a half circle and the moment the duck appeared again, for a second only, perhaps, the gun was discharged and the bird at once retrieved. The hours went fast and at eleven o'clock the morning shooting was practically over. Jim was signalled for and sent back for some lunch.

"It's too far to walk, Jack," explained Cornell,

"and we're comfortable enough here, and from the look of things I think the afternoon flight will be early."

By four o'clock they had killed ninety-six ducks, and leaving Jim to bring home the birds, they were rowed ashore and tramped to the club house. There Oswald found a letter from his wife, just sent down. Had he thought of her during the day? No, but he had been busy and excited. The letter, the last he received from her for many a year, ran thus :

"MY OWN HUSBAND :

"I am up almost at daybreak to write to you. Oh, Jack, darling, there is no use in telling you how fearfully lonely I was last night. What do you think I did? Now don't laugh—I put your picture under my pillow. Am I not a goose? Oh, Jack, come back soon to me. You are the breath of my life. I love you, Jack."

"Your CLARE."

"I am sending Cecile out with this at seven o'clock. I hope you may get it to-day. C."

"God bless her pure soul," said Jack to himself, as he closed the letter and put it in his pocket.

The next day was not a shooting one, and they tried the snipe meadows with but indifferent success. Jack had a barrel of ducks shipped to Clare and put in with the birds a little note of directions as to whom they should be sent.

The day following was devoted again to the ducks, with rather poor results. Jack began to wonder why he did not hear again from Clare. He even sent the boat up to Havre de Grace to enquire at the post-office. He seemed to have a fore-warning of evil and gradually became so distrait and unlike himself that George Cornell was neither surprised nor greatly disappointed when, that evening, Jack said that he believed he would go back to town in the morning. George wished to stop a few days longer, so, early the next morning, Jack Oswald took the train at Havre de Grace for home. "Home," a name only henceforth for Jack Oswald.

CHAPTER III.

OSWALD had been away for three days on his duck-shooting trip. Clare was sitting in the pretty alcove, which she had dignified with the name of boudoir.

She was working industriously on a fancy worsted waistcoat for Jack, and as she worked, she hummed one of her favourite little French ballads, "*Si tu savais*," and thought of the dear one far away.

The bell rang and in a few moments the maid announced: "Mrs. Lincoln."

"Oh, send her right in here, Mary," and meeting her friend at the door, they kissed each other.

"I knew, Clare, that if you were at home and alone I could come right in."

"How sweet of you to come to-day, Marie, to cheer me in my temporary widowhood."

"I hope it will never be worse than temporary, Clare, dear."

"Oh, Marie, excuse me, how flippant and careless I am."

Marie Lincoln had but recently lost her husband after a short illness. They had been married ten years and she was left with a five-year-old boy. She was much older than Clare, but they had become fast friends and saw much of each other.

"Now, Marie, take off your wraps and let us have a good long talk. How is the boy?"

"Very well, except for a little cold. I thought it better not to bring him with me in this raw November air."

"November has always seemed a sad month to me, Marie, until now, when all is changed. When Jack's around I care for nothing else. You know the magic of that word 'together,' Marie."

Marie sighed and answered "Yes." Silence followed for a few moments, each busy with deep thoughts of her own.

"What German said: '*Wenn blätter fallen ist der Winter nah,*' Clare?" said Marie presently. "I always like to say that, though it's about the extent of my knowledge of the language."

"I don't remember, but it is pretty and has the merit of truth. Thank you, Cecile," as the maid handed her a half-dozen letters on a tray. Clare looked eagerly over the budget for the well-known handwriting, but not finding it sighed lightly and said to herself: "Poor fellow, he was too tired after his day's shooting. I shall have some word tomorrow surely." Then, aloud, she said:

"The Anson Jones are going to give a large ball. Margaret writes to ask if I will help her in finding some unique favours for the cotillon."

"How they love to entertain. I wonder how long before Margaret will become engaged. She is very pretty, but a spoiled child."

"At the same time she has many good qualities, and once in love and married she may make a very superior wife and mother," replied Clare.

"It is funny, isn't it? I remember at least two cases where girls I knew well had been accustomed to stay a-bed until eleven o'clock, have breakfast in their rooms, and in many ways were spoiled and petted, but once married, they dropped all this—would insist on breakfasting with their husbands, and—what's the matter? You haven't had bad news, have you, dear?"

"No, no news to speak of, only a very puzzling communication from some one I don't know and asking for an interview."

"Woman?" asked Marie.

"Yes," said Clare; "but no matter, it is some poor woman, poor but proud, probably, who wants to borrow money."

After Marie had left, Clare stood still in the middle of the room, with the letter in one hand, while the other rested lightly on her little writing desk. A half-puzzled, half-frightened look had crept into her beautiful eyes. She stood there for an instant irresolute, and then, snatching up Jack's picture, which stood there in its gay red frame, she exclaimed: "No, no, Jack, darling, forgive even my unformed thought; you are true, you have been, you always will be." But what could this letter mean? Try as she would she could not shake off a heavy feeling which crept into her heart, an intangi-

ble consciousness that something was about to happen. The letter, in strong feminine handwriting almost resembling a man's, read thus :

“ West 24th St., Nov. 29th.

“ MRS. JOHN OSWALD,

“ DEAR MADAM :

“ May I ask for an interview with you personally and alone? It is about a very private matter. This should be granted at once. It is unnecessary for me to add that this is neither blackmail nor a threat.

“ Yours truly,

“ KITTY ST. CLAIR.”

Clare stood and thought, but to no avail. Her first impulse had been to consign the communication to the fireplace, but she said to herself : “ No, I will wait until to-morrow, and a letter from Jack will drive off these shadows in an instant.”

Her mother came as usual about five o'clock. Clare said nothing of her letter. Had it been anonymous she would not have hesitated about showing and burning it. Clare seemed abnormally gay that evening. Two or three young people dropped in and they had some music and singing. The barrel of ducks arrived and Clare was very proud. She gave orders as to their distribution and was a little disappointed that Jack had said so little in the note that was tied on the one pair of canvas-backs in the lot ; but it was *his* loved handwriting, perhaps a little scrawly, but it told her that he loved her, and,

when the chance offered, she excused herself and in her room pinned the dear words near her heart. After the guests had gone, her mother said to her :

“Clare, dear, I am so glad to see you happy. You looked so glad to-night when you got Jack’s note. It made me feel young again. When is he coming back? ”

“ He does not say, mamma, only that he is having fine sport. I shall not expect him for some days yet. Good-night.”

“Good-night, dear,” and Clare went to her room. She sat again thinking it all over, but could get no comfort, and at last a dreamful sleep came to her.

By breakfast time the next morning Clare had determined to send Cecile to West Twenty-fourth Street to say that Mrs. Oswald would see Miss St. Clair at eleven o’clock. She was very nervous in view of the meeting, but no one would have suspected it from her calm exterior. When at half-past eleven the door-bell rang, she had completely conquered herself and awaited her visitor with absolute composure. Kitty St. Clair was shown into the drawing-room, and Clare went at once to her. As she entered the room the first glance at the face of her caller told her that she had seen her before, when and where she had no time to think.

“ Miss St. Clair, I believe? ”

“ Yes, and I am addressing Mrs. Oswald? ”

“ Yes, will you be seated? ”

“ Thank you, Mrs. Oswald, but what I have to say

is so private, and I may say, compromising, that, if possible, I should like to speak where servants could not overhear."

"We are quite safe here," answered Clare coldly, her heart beating fast and a vague sinking feeling coming over her. But her self-possession never deserted her, she still clung to a hope, a straw, that it might be simply an appeal for aid, or that some dear friend of Jack's was involved. She noted in an instant the *tout ensemble* of her guest. She saw that she was very pretty. Her hair showed the use of bleaching fluid, her complexion was exquisite, but embellished somewhat by the judicious use of the pencil and rouge. Her figure was small but too rounded for perfect beauty. Her dress was handsome, but pronounced, and the hat, one of the large and much befeathered kind in vogue. Her eyes were what arrested the attention most. They were a deep hazel, captivating and yet they had a ray of insincerity in them, the mirror of an untrue soul to one who looked closely as Clare did.

"Mrs. Oswald, your husband once loved me and I loved him," began Kitty with horrible bluntness.

In an instant Clare knew that all her fond theories as to the cause of the visit were but chaff in a wind. She controlled herself perfectly, however.

"Indeed!"

"Yes," replied her caller, a little nettled at the absolute calmness with which her first shot had

been received, "I was his mistress for a number of years."

"Is this what you have come to tell me?" answered Clare, rising from her seat.

"Yes, this is part of what I came to tell you, the rest you shall have now. Your husband basely deserted me when he became engaged to marry you. I loved him and he was my sole support. He is the father of my child and must support it."

At the first few words Clare had sunk again to her seat, and with face of ashes gazed at the woman, who, with blazing eyes and flushed face, completed her accusation.

"It is false," said Clare, in a voice so low as to be scarcely heard, but with an intonation of unutterable woe.

"It is not false and here is my proof," cried she, as she drew from her bosom a paper and passed it to Clare, who mechanically took it.

"Read it, please," said the woman, almost frightened at the effect of her words. With sight blurred, not by tears, Clare read: "Health Board, City of New York, Birth Certificate. John Oswald St. Clair. Father's name, John Oswald. Mother's name, Katherine St. Clair. Dated Sept.—." Within a few days of her wedding—their wedding! She held out the paper in front of her mechanically and then with a heart-rending, shuddering cry: "Mother, Cecile," she sank slowly back and down, and all was black.

During the stillness of the night, she lay absolutely quiet but with staring eyes. She could not think; she was stunned, dull of thought and reasoning. The moment had come to her as it has come to many women, when she realised that her life was a mistake. The one person she had thoroughly believed in, trusted, to whom she had given her life, soul and body, was false! Her "golden image with the feet of clay" had fallen shattered. A horrid earthquake had torn her world apart, and she stood on the edge of an abyss. Could she take up the thread of her life again where she had left it before knowing him? No, she was no longer the girl of four short months ago. A married woman and at the age of nineteen, her life's romance was done. She had loved as few women do. Unselfishness and self-abnegation were the main-springs of her character. She had known but few men well. Jack Oswald had entered her life and world, had wooed and won her, and she had placed him on a pedestal. "Innocent until proved guilty" would have been her maxim had she been a man, and was, as a woman, but the proof was so overwhelming, so convincing. If her husband had been taken from her by death, like Marie Lincoln's, she would still have memory, sacred memory. She would have his pictures, letters, all to cherish—now—the blackness of darkness.

Mrs. Lawrence knew at once that some blow had

fallen upon her daughter and begged her to confide in her, but in her pride Clare replied :

"Mamma, dear, I will tell you all some day. Now I will only say that I cannot live with my husband. It is my wish to go to you, to begin our old life together again if possible, just you and I. You will not ask anything more, I am sure."

"Of course, darling, I know your reasons must be good, but you are taking so serious a step. It will cause comment and possibly scandal. I am your mother, the best friend you have in the world. You have been a perfect daughter to me, and the only real tie to bind me to life and happiness. I will not force your confidence, but this determination of yours should not be final if there is the smallest loophole of escape. I have no object or hope in life except your happiness, my darling child."

Clare sat silent with hands locked close together. Two great tears unheeded rolled down her cheeks. No sound escaped her. She sat a picture of despair. Finally she said in a hopeless voice :

"I cannot tell you, dearest mother, but it must be as I wish."

Clare moved to her old home the same day. She left her mother and maid to attend to the moving, which really only consisted in packing her clothes. When asked whether she wished her own things she replied, "No, they are not mine now." Then she wrote at once to Pierre Van Beuren, ask-

ing him to come and see her at her mother's house. She had thought of him as her husband's best friend, and had determined to tell him in her own way of the separation. On Friday afternoon Pierre called without the least suspicion as to the cause of Mrs. Oswald's request, but with the possible idea that it had to do with some investments which Mrs. Lawrence had had in mind for months past.

When Clare came down to the parlour, however, he saw at once that something was amiss. She greeted him brightly and with a smile, as always, but something in her look, in her face, told him that a crisis in her life had come. He sat perplexed, waiting for his cue, while Clare began directly, "Mr. Van Beuren, I sent for you to-day to tell you that I have separated from my husband. He is, as you know, absent from town, but I have come here to live with my mother again, and for the rest of my life. The reasons for this step, so far as I am concerned, must remain a closed book. You will use your own tact and judgment in speaking of it when you are obliged to, I am sure."

Van Beuren, deeply distressed, answered: "Mrs. Oswald, what you tell me grieves me beyond words. I cannot express to you my astonishment. I see that it is a very painful topic, and I do not ask for an explanation, but I can heartily assure you of the sympathy and respect of all Jack's—I mean your husband's—friends. We have all learned to love you and to consider you rather as one of us. Mrs.

Oswald, I can say no more, I am too unhappy to say anything—" and with a sob in his voice the big-hearted fellow clumsily made for the door.

Clare watched him go without a word, then for the first time she broke down and sobbed. She buried her head in the pillows of the sofa and moaned bitterly: "Oh, my husband, my husband. You have broken my heart."

Clare had, as Van Beuren said, become immensely popular with Oswald's friends. She was so full of good comradeship, so interested in them and in all their comings and goings. She was no prude and preserved withal that charming womanly quality which always appeals to men.

That day she had sent a letter to her husband. She did not wish to see him. Yes, she yearned to see him with a fierce, almost unconquerable, yearning, yet she stifled it, knowing that he was not worthy. Had she learned only the first part of the woman's story before marriage, she in her guilelessness would have drawn back. She never would have married Jack Oswald. Learning only this afterwards, she would have felt it keenly, but would have excused it. Endowed with much of her mother's common-sense, she would have said: "I have no part or parcel in his past; our life commenced to-day, our wedding day." But this frightful living present accusation—nay, *fact*—a child—his—out of wedlock—and the concealment and false pretense of it all. No, better nothing than a sham.

She could not see him, though she knew that he would try to see her, try to effect a reconciliation, if only for the sight of the outer world. So thinking she sat and wrote :

“Under the circumstances, a separation is the only course. I shall remain with my mother. Should you wish it you may get a divorce. I will not oppose it. Do not try to see me ; I shall not willingly meet you again.” She signed the paper, sealed the envelope, and sent it to his house, hers no more. This done she tried to forget—tried hard. Her mother had, from the first, an inkling of the cause of her child’s misfortune, but she left no stone unturned to satisfy herself as to the correctness of her suspicions. She had had interviews with both Van Beuren and Balford and had learned enough of Jack’s past to form a very correct estimate of the situation. From Clare she got no enlightenment, nor did she blame her now for the step she had taken. Her heart bled for her patient, suffering child and her resentment toward Jack was correspondingly severe. Clare took most comfort in her music, and her voice, as she played and sang, was something too sad and pathetic. It contained the true *feu sacré*. . . .

Why describe the effect produced upon Oswald on his return from his trip? It was as if a shot had pierced his heart ! His first impulse was to go to Clare and tell her, but what could he tell her now ?

He had arrived at ten o’clock at night, full of

the anticipation, anxious to tell Clare of all his small adventures and then, perhaps, run over to the club for a little while. And so to his club he went and talked like a fool and forgot everything until midday of the next day, when he found himself lying on his own bed dressed as he had come from the trip, with Pierre Van Beuren by his side. Pierre had brought him back from the club at three o'clock in the morning. Oswald's head was aching badly, but he sat up and gazing stupidly about, muttered, "Where's Clare? Oh, I forgot, didn't she go somewhere, or something?"

"Lie down, old man, and take another nap," said Van Beuren soothingly. "I'll bring you a cup of coffee in a moment and you'll feel all right."

"No, Van, but wasn't something—didn't something happen? My God! Has Clare left me?" and the half-inebriated, half-crazed man fell back on his pillow and broke into sobs.

CHAPTER IV.

CLARE OSWALD'S life from now on was a blank. She walked about like an automaton and attended to the housekeeping which her mother had put in her hands. She rarely went out. Her mother insisted on their driving in the Park every pleasant day, but she would see none of the friends who called save Marie Lincoln, but between them the painful subject was never referred to. Marie had been told by Mrs. Lawrence all the reasons for the change in Clare's life which she herself knew, and Marie was full of love and sympathy, but no question or word of curiosity ever escaped her. One day, a month after Clare had left her husband, she sat at the piano thinking, her hands quiet upon the keys. The butler brought her a letter. "The boy is waiting for an answer, Ma'am," he said. The writing was strangely familiar, but she was at a loss to identify it. There was a suspicious musky smell about the envelope that seemed to Clare to recall something disagreeable, but she opened it mechanically and read :

"MRS. OSWALD,

" May I see you for a moment to-day or to-morrow. I am afraid I may be too ill to go out in a few days. This is important.

" KITTY ST. CLAIR."

A look of horror overspread Clare's face as she read, and the letter and envelope fell from her hands as though she had been stung. Then she recovered herself, and taking the dainty brass tongs from the fireplace, lifted the paper to the flames and watched it burn; then with a deep sigh she opened the door and said to the servant, who was waiting, "Tell the messenger there is no answer."

Poor girl! how white and thin she looked. In her snowy gown, unrelieved by colour, her pale face had an ethereal, angelic look in which resignation as well as despair could be read. She was slowly pining away, and both her mother and Marie Lincoln could see what the end would be. It might be years before she gave way completely, but they knew that Clare was of the mould to love once and for all. Doctor Swift was called in one day without Clare's knowledge or consent. She knew him well, and yielded with a pleasant smile to his cross examination. Finally he said:

"I should advise you to go away, Mrs. Oswald."

"Where do you want to send me, Doctor?"

"Well, to some warm climate for the Winter, preferably by sea, if you are a good sailor."

"I do not really care, Doctor, but, as far as the sea goes, I am a good sailor."

"What do you say, then, to Cuba or the Bahamas?"

"Do you wish me to go, Mamma?"

"Yes, dear, if the doctor advises and it will do you good."

"Very well, I will go. I will take Cecile and go to Nassau."

"That will be just the thing," said Doctor Swift, "and you could not very well go to Cuba just now, as things are so upset there."

So it was arranged that Clare should go to Nassau, taking her maid with her, while Mrs. Lawrence and Marie Lincoln would follow a little later to come back with her in the early spring.

Doctor Swift had told Mrs. Lawrence that he could find nothing radically wrong with her daughter, but there seemed to be a general breaking down of her nervous system, a condition which would in time lead to a state of nervous exhaustion—and this would react on her general health. He advised against Mrs. Lawrence going with Clare, as he said she would then be too dependent, but if thrown on her own resources the necessity of doing for herself would take her thoughts from her great sorrow. Then, too, a change in environment would keep her mind and memory from becoming morbid. . . .

As the *El Capitan* of the Wall Line steamed slowly down the bay, on a raw December day, Clare Oswald stood as far astern as she could get, and, with dry eyes and a bursting heart, saw the great buildings of the city, the Brooklyn Bridge and Statue of Liberty fade away in the gathering mist.

She had not noticed her fellow passengers, and, after the boat got outside of Sandy Hook, she retired to her stateroom on deck. She found Cecile arranging her wardrobe, and wondering what she should do with the wealth of flowers which made the atmosphere heavy with their fragrance.

Her mother and Marie Lincoln had come to see Clare off, and many others had sent remembrances in the shape of fruit and delicacies. The deck steward brought a package of letters and papers.

"Is this Mrs. Oswald?"

"Yes."

"Here are your letters, Ma'am; they were left with the purser last mail, just as we cast off."

Clare looked them over. One envelope attracted her attention. It bore a strange handwriting, and in one corner was an underlined word, "Important." It had been forwarded by the butler with the rest from her home that morning. She opened it hurriedly and found an enclosure. Another envelope, addressed in that hated woman's handwriting, but scrawled and half blotted, almost illegible. Clare's impulse was to crush it unopened and cast it into the sea, but the envelope enclosing it and marked "Important"! what could that mean?

"Cecile, go down and see the head steward and give him this money, and tell him who it is from, and get me a quiet seat at the table, but near this end of the saloon."

She handed her maid a bill as she spoke, and, as

soon as Cecile had gone, she opened the suspicious letter. It was written in pencil and was evidently the result of much physical effort. It was dated on the day previous and read :

“ For God’s sake, Mrs. Oswald, come and see a dying woman who wishes to confess her baseness so that she may go into the next world with fewer sins on her soul. I wish to tell and prove to you that I am a liar and a forger. I want to bring you back to your husband. What I have said about the child was false. The certificate was forged. I have never had a child. In the name of Heaven, come for a few moments to-day or to-morrow.” Here it ended with an attempt at signature. The scrawl fluttered from the pallid fingers to the floor. Clare sat staring at the wall of her cabin. Long she sat and looked. Her eyes would not close. Her body felt numb. She could not raise her hands. A half hour later, Cecile, having had her supper, came into the cabin. There sat her mistress ; she might have been marble.

“ Why, Madame Oswald, *qu’est ce que c’est ?* Are you not well ? Let me get you some eau de vie.”

“ No—thank—you, Cecile,” replied Clare, each word coming slowly and measured. “ I—am—better—now.”

“ But, Madame, you look so *triste*, so ill, have you *mal de mer* perhaps ? ”

“ No—Cecile—but—I—want—to—lie—down, I—feel—faint—” and, slowly inclining forward with

eyes set, she would have fallen to the floor but for the strong arms of Cecile, who placed her mistress on the sofa and then, loosening her collar and corsets, bathed her white and bloodless temples with eau de cologne. For the second time in her life Clare had fainted.

Clare remained in her stateroom that night and the following day. "What shall I do, what shall I do," was the unspoken cry through that night and day. She knew no one, could consult with no one. It would be days before they came to port and then, what? What dependence could she place on this woman, even if she were dying? Yet she read the truth in every line. She must cable at once on landing. She must take the next boat back, back perhaps to Jack! Oh! God, she must not think of that! It could not be. Badly as she had been treated by fate, that would be too heavenly.

She did not want to think of all the possibilities in store for her, but unconsciously she was, after twenty-four hours, becoming almost cheerful. That Jack was innocent of what she had considered his deepest sin was the greatest comfort to her; the possibility that they might come together again made her heart beat fast and furious. She began to take a little interest in the other passengers. She had been placed at the Captain's left. Her *vis à vis* was a Mr. DeForest from Philadelphia, and next to her sat a Mr. Howe and his young sixteen-year-old daughter, Belle. Next to Mr. DeForest

was a Mr. Alexander Stone of New York, a young fellow of pleasing personnel, who was taking the winter trip for his health. A journalist, George Farr, completed the number of those near by with whom she became acquainted. Her sad, Madonna-like face created a general interest in her, as was natural on shipboard, and the surmise in the smoking-room was that she was a young widow, though her dress was not the garb of deep mourning, for though she appeared always in dark or subdued colours, there was no suggestion of crêpe upon her costume. On the third evening out, Mr. Stone asked her, after dinner, if she would join a group made up mostly of her immediate table companions. She had been walking the deck as usual with Cecile, who occupied the sofa in her stateroom, and was her constant and sole companion. The moon was at its full and shining with cloudless brilliancy. The night was mild, and the sea smooth. After a second's hesitation Clare accepted the invitation.

"Thank you, Mr. Stone, I should like to very much."

"We wanted to have a little music, you know. Do you sing, Mrs. Oswald; you look as though you might."

"Yes, I sing a little, but you must excuse me to-night, Mr. Stone; I haven't sung in so long a time that I fear I should give you no pleasure, and bring myself no credit."

They had reached the jolly laughing party, and

the men all jumped to give Mrs. Oswald a chair and place among them. Mr. DeForest had a guitar on his knees and had been strumming some chords.

"How strangely the moon looks to-night," said Miss Howe. "It is quite clear, yet that enormous ring or halo,—don't you call it,—makes it look queer. I wonder what a real sailor would say it meant?"

"If I was in dear old slow Philadelphia," answered Mr. DeForest, "I should say that to-morrow would be cloudy, perhaps a storm, but we are almost in the tropics now and I won't prophesy."

"Give us a song, Mr. DeForest," said Stone.

"Well, what shall it be, sentimental or comic?"

"What a question, with the Goddess of Night trying to make us sentimental," spoke up Mr. Farr.

"Well, I'll sing 'Thou art so near and yet so far,' see?"

As the laugh subsided he began, in his low but thrilling baritone voice, Clare's favourite song, "There is no star in Heaven to guide me—" No one saw the tears spring to her eyes. Huddled up in her rugs she listened and looked up at the vaulted sky, and as she gazed she thought of the lines: "Watching those far-off lights, which see him, whom I long to see." There is surely a comfort sometimes even in misery, and as Clare listened, a quiet feeling stole over her, and she was for a moment almost contented. As the words, "While I have you,

sweetheart, beside me," died away on the still air, some one, it was Stone, said softly:

"Won't you sing something?"

He alone had noticed her emotion and he pitied her. He knew nothing of who she was or why she was there, but he saw, with unusual masculine perception, that she was unhappy and in need of friends.

"Yes, I will try. Can you accompany me, Mr. DeForest? I was going to sing 'Could I' by Tosti."

"No, I am afraid that is beyond me, but please sing without accompaniment, Mrs. Oswald."

Clare began in her sympathetic voice: "Could I but come to thee once, but once only, there as you sit alone." She seemed to see only Jack before her. She was oblivious to all surroundings. Every one read the story in her voice, and, as she finished, no one sat with dry eyes.

After a little further desultory conversation Clare said: "I shall go to my stateroom now, Mr. Stone, if you will escort me. I feel quite chilly."

"There's a heart-broken woman, I'll wager anything," said Farr, as she disappeared.

Clare could not sleep. She sat up and read for awhile and then tried to write. She thought of the cable she would send and wondered when she could get an answer. They expected to reach Nassau at eleven o'clock on the following morning. Her rooms at the hotel were already engaged. She

must be up early. She was nervous and excited. She heard footsteps on the deck outside. She put out the light and looked out of the little window. She saw DeForest and Stone pacing the deck. She overheard DeForest say:

"If I didn't know it wasn't so, I should say we were near shore now. Look at that ripple over there; wouldn't you say, up north, that that was shoal water?"

Finally Clare lay down and tried to sleep. She heard her friends say good-night, as the bells announced eleven-thirty. At twelve, and again at one, she still heard the sailors getting the baggage and freight from the hold for the next day's debarkment at Nassau. She dozed off finally and knew nothing until she was suddenly awakened by a terrific crash and grating sound. It was as though a great chain was tearing the keel to pieces. Clare jumped from her berth and listened. There was silence for an instant, and then a confused murmur of voices and a second shock worse than the first.

She opened the door of her stateroom and listened again. She saw shadowy forms hurrying along the deck. She noticed that the screw had stopped. The great ship had a list and the stern was lower than the bow. She called to a passing figure.

"Haven't we struck something?"

"Yes, mum, we are on a reef, I think," answered the sailor as he hurried by.

She was not frightened now. She was startled

at first. She went back and began to dress. Cecile was up and cried in terror :

“ *Mais, Madame*, we will be drowned, *pauvre cherie*, and it is raining, and you will catch cold. *Mon Dieu*, why did we leave New York ! ”

Stone and DeForest both came to her cabin door, and knocking, told her to hurry, as the boat was slowly sinking. She finally appeared on deck completely dressed, even to her coat and cap. Everything now was still. No one spoke. Then there came some short, quick orders, and life preservers were passed around. Then the life boats, too few in number, were swung out. Two men took off their life preservers, already strapped on, and placed them about a woman and child who had none. The Captain, who at first seemed to have lost his head, finally ordered all the women into the life boats as they hung on the davits. The ship was slowly but surely settling. Then followed sad partings as fathers and husbands bid their loved ones good-bye. Mr. Howe placed his daughter in the boat, and loving messages were exchanged for those at home, in case either should be saved.

The *El Capitan* had run on a coral reef and the danger was that she might slide off backwards into deep water. Many of the men took to the rafts. The women were all huddled together in the boats. The rain was pouring down and the salt spray dashed over them. From time to time a voice was heard :

“Water up to ports, sir.”

“Water half-way up port holes, sir.”

“Water above ports, sir.”

The suspense was terrible and the silence made it still worse. Clare felt intensely for those cowed and frightened beings around her. The women were all weeping, and an unconquerable desire to cheer them took possession of her, and, from a sudden inspiration, she began to sing old familiar ballads, such as all knew and loved. At first her voice showed a slight tremor, then rang clear and sweet out through the ship and deep into the rain and mist, soothing and strengthening every heart that heard it. Then the Captain gave orders to have the boat lowered. The ship's stern was now level with the water. Guns had been fired and rockets sent up for the last hour. The Captain, knowing they must be near land, decided to try and send the women ashore. The night before he had looked in vain for the beacon of the light-ship anchored at the northerly extremity of the line of dangerous reefs. Not seeing it, he had concluded that it was out of order. As a matter of fact, he was twenty-five miles out of his course. The first boat was lowered with part of the women. The second officer was in command, with four stokers to row.

Clare and poor shivering Cecile were in this boat. They made but little headway and were shouting back their last good-byes, when, to the horror of all, the boat was seen to keel over abruptly, and then

capsize. In the glimmering dawn one person after another appeared floating and wildly grasping the air. Another boat was hurriedly emptied as it hung on its supports, and rowed as quickly as possible out into the darkness. They returned after half an hour with but four of the ill-fated party, three passengers found clinging to oars and flotsam, and one of the crew.

No cries, no sounds were heard. The steamer had settled on the rock and the Captain decided to wait until dawn. When Cecile was restored to consciousness, she called and cried for her mistress, but in vain. Clare Oswald was among the missing.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER a few unsuccessful attempts to see and have an interview with his wife, Jack Oswald gave himself up to silent despair. His apartment was closed and he took rooms not far from the club. All New York soon knew that he and his wife had separated, and many theories and conjectures were advanced to explain it. His married life had, to outward appearances, been quite ideal. His wife had become immensely popular. "What a good fellow she would have made had she been a man," was the general estimate of her, by her men friends, and could masculine approbation have said more?

At first Jack plunged into the dissipation of drink. He had thought of suicide in his early frenzy, but though weak in many ways, this had always seemed to him nothing but cowardice. He had, one night, taken up his pistol and fondled it and thought how easy it would be to end all his sorrows by putting the touch of the little toy upon his temple.

But the thought of his mother, whom he had not known, and his father, whose memory he revered, came to him and stopped him. He knew that there was no hope for him now that his own wrong doing and Kitty's wish for revenge had come between them. He knew it all. He had never seen the

child, he had not cared to, but he had heard that Kitty St. Clair had been obliged to give up her engagement at the Empire for three weeks, back in September, and that she was again ill and shut up in her apartments.

He went to his business every day, but did his work in the most perfunctory and mechanical way. He usually dined at the club alone, or occasionally with Van Beuren or Ernest Balford. At first his friends tried to interest him in things that he had liked before marriage, but after awhile they gave it up and allowed him to follow his own desires. The supports of his life had dropped out, and the ruin, his own ruin, was all that was left.

One night, a month after the separation, he and Van were dining together at the club. Toward the end of the meal, Van said :

"I hope Mrs. Oswald will be benefitted by her trip, Jack."

"What trip, Van?"

"Why, I am told that she sailed day before yesterday for Nassau on the *El Capitan*."

"I did not know it, Van. I hope she will be better."

"Excuse me, dear boy, for speaking of it. I suspected you might not know it, and thought to tell you in this way," answered Van, seeing the look of hopelessness in his friend's face.

"Don't excuse yourself, Van, I know how deeply you feel for me, but I deserve no sympathy."

"Nonsense, Jack. You have had hard luck. You have done nothing radically wrong, only had hard luck. Curses on the women anyway."

"I've killed my wife, that's all," said Jack; and Van Beuren saw that he wished the conversation to drop.

They went down to the café for their coffee, and, on the way past the letter-boxes, Jack, from force of habit, opened his. To his surprise, there was a note. He glanced at it but the feminine handwriting was unknown to him. As soon as he was alone, he opened it curiously and read, written in pencil:

"West 24th St.

"MR. JOHN OSWALD,

"DEAR SIR,—

"Miss St. Clair, who I believe is an old friend of yours, is dying of consumption. She may not live another twenty-four hours. She begs that you will come to see her, as she has important papers to give you. She is delirious much of the while, and, at such times, talks of some crime she has done and asks forgiveness from you. You can judge for yourself as to whether you should come or not.

"Respectfully,

"ADA COOK, Nurse."

Oswald sat for some moments holding the note in his hand. What could it mean? Pity or sympathy for the dying woman played no part in his

thoughts, but the words, "some crime she had done," and "asks forgiveness." What crime could she refer to unless that of foisting a child on him which did not belong to him? What else could it be for which she should ask forgiveness? "Good God!" Oswald sprang to his feet. His only thought was to go to her at once, for the suspense of waiting would be unbearable and possibly fatal. He went to the coat-room, and, a few moments later, was hurrying across the square. He turned into Twenty-fourth Street and hurried westward. A wet snow was falling, and, in his haste, he had forgotten his overshoes and his patent leathers were wet through before he had traversed a block. He dodged an ambulance which went clanging up Eighth Avenue, and the flying mud bespattered his overcoat.

He reached the well-known number and leaped up the steps. An almost hysterical excitement had seized him. His temples throbbed and his mind was not fully under control. He had never thought to cross that threshold again, but now he knew that he must see the woman who had ruined his happiness, before it was too late. He must wring from her an explanation of the words, "some crime she had done."

A coloured servant opened the door.

"I wish to see Miss Ada Cook, who, I believe, is nursing Miss St. Clair."

"Yes, sir, but I don't think she can leave Miss St. Clair; she is very low, they tell me."

"You go and give my message; say it is Mr. Oswald," and he pressed a silver coin into her hand.

"All right, sir, I'll see."

A little whispered conversation could be heard at the top of the stairs, and then the steps of some one descending, and a sweet-faced woman, with greyish hair, neat in her simple gown, with white cap and cuffs, entered the little parlour.

"This is Mr. Oswald?"

"Yes."

"I am Miss Cook, the nurse of Miss St. Clair. The patient is very low, Mr. Oswald, but I am going to let you see her, for her sake, as the doctor has consented. She may rally a little if she can get this trouble off her mind, poor soul. Night and day she is worrying over it. Will you follow me?"

The nurse led the way up to the second story front room. In the dim light, as they entered, Jack could see nothing at first. There was an odour of medicine and disinfectants in the air. Gradually he could make out the piano and the draperies of the alcove, where the dainty brass bed stood. The nurse parted the curtains and Jack started as he looked at the figure lying there. Could that be Kitty St. Clair! He turned with the question almost on his lips, but the nurse shook her head. Could that object there on the bed be Kitty St. Clair! She was breathing in short, catchy gasps—her eyes and lips half open, the lips dry and parched. Her skin was very white and looked like parchment, so

tightly was it drawn over the cheek bones. Every vestige of colour and flesh was gone. And *this* was what was left of sparkling, laughing, beautiful Kitty! At first Jack could not believe it, but as he gazed, she began to move and mumble some unintelligible words. He leaned over her to catch them. He thought he heard his own name. He also caught the words "liar," "forgery" and "baby"—His heart was beating now like a trip hammer and way up in his throat.

He turned with livid face to the nurse and said slowly, but with a voice of such absolute command as not to be disobeyed:

"Wake her and make her talk."

The nurse leaned over and, taking the skeleton hand in hers, said gently:

"Kitty, Kitty, some one has come to see you."

The girl opened her eyes slowly, and fixed them on Jack Oswald's face. She looked long and stupidly and then the eyes slowly closed again, and a little sigh of apparent contentment escaped the thin purple lips.

"Make her talk," said Jack almost savagely, grasping the nurse's wrist as in a vice.

"Kitty, Kitty," said she. "This is Mr. Oswald, whom you wanted to see."

The eyes opened again and gazed at Jack. Gradually a little intelligence seemed to come into them. With a fearful effort Jack said:

"Kitty, do you know me—Jack?"

The voice seemed to bring with it memory and words, and she tried to say something, but her lips and tongue would not articulate. The nurse moistened her lips and the girl seemed to rouse herself. Jack began again :

“Kitty, this is Jack—Jack Oswald. Do you wish to say something to me?”

The slightest suspicion of a nod said “Yes.”

“Take this, Kitty,” said the nurse gently, as she put the medicine glass, containing some aromatic spirits of ammonia and brandy, to her lips.

Revived a little, she made as if to reach for Jack. Divining her thought, he leaned low over the bed to catch her whispers. In disjointed sentences and with frightened eyes, she murmured: “False,” “no baby,”—“forgery,”—“revenge,” and her head sank further down in the white pillow, while a tiny gurgling sound was heard deep in her bosom. She made another effort and with eyes staring up at the ceiling she whispered: “Papers,” “proof,” “take them,” “go to wife,”—and as she spoke, her white, almost transparent hand moved a few inches toward her pillow.

“I know what she wishes, Mr. Oswald, a packet of papers under her pillow.”

The dying eyes wandered to the nurse, and a wan effort to smile showed that the nurse had guessed correctly. She handed the packet to Oswald and again the eyes slowly said “Yes.” Oswald’s breath came short and quick. He had

caught the spirit of the conspiracy against him of which these papers evidently held the proofs. The glassy eyes of the sick girl were fixed on his, then a strange look came over the face, a little red froth just showed at the corner of the mouth, and, with one deep sigh of relief, poor Kitty was dead.

Oswald stepped at once into the parlour while the nurse composed the stiffening figure, and without delay tore open the bundle of papers.

The first paper was the birth certificate, which, as Oswald looked wildly at it, seemed to bear the stamp of genuineness—duly signed, and endorsed “folio 466!” Pinned to it, however, was a sheet of note paper containing Kitty’s confession, as follows :

“This certificate with signatures is a forgery. I paid Dr. Wm. Smith, of West Houston Street, one hundred dollars for getting the printed blank from the Board of Health and for making it out and signing it. I represented to him that I wanted to use it to bring a lover to terms and would destroy it. Doctor Smith is now in New Jersey somewhere, see other enclosures. He tried to blackmail me and I kept the letter to prove what I say. I have never had a child. As I hope for forgiveness in the next world, I swear that this is the truth.

“KITTY ST. CLAIR.”

“I also swear that I have never seen Mr. John Oswald nor heard from him since the time he wrote me his intention of getting married and sent me money, six months before his wedding.”

The next enclosure was a letter signed “W. S.”

and written on office paper bearing the name at the top: "Wm. Smith, M. D. Office hours 8-11. Sundays by appointment." This was evidently a blackmailing letter and read:

"Kitty St. Clair—Send me to General Post Office, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, one hundred dollars cash, or I will see our gullible friend O. and tell him a few things about you and the spurious kid."

This was enough! Oswald was free once more to ask Clare to come back. The proof that he had been falsely accused was much clearer and more positive than the story which had torn his wife from his side.

He left the apartments for the last time and he hurried back to his rooms. He was still too excited to think clearly, as he sat in his little parlour with the packet of papers in his hand. Suddenly he remembered Van Beuren's words: "I was told that she had sailed day before yesterday for Nassau." How long, he wondered, would it take to get to Nassau. He thought it was about a three-days trip. He jumped to his feet, thinking to find Van at once and find out what he knew.

It was now nearly midnight, but if Van had gone to the theatre he would be quite likely to be at the club at this time. Over there the hall captain told him that Mr. Van Beuren had come in fifteen minutes before and was still in the café. He walked back and not only found Van Beuren but Haswell, Balford, Jennings and Brown arguing over the foot-

ball chances in the great game to take place on Saturday.

"They say that Yale is going to protest Bosworth," Haswell was saying.

"On what grounds?" asked Jennings.

"Well, he graduated last year and has taken a post-graduate course, but only came back three weeks ago, and some disgruntled Harvard substitute, it is reported, has informed the Yale men that, under the rule, Bosworth is not eligible, but I don't think anything will come of it."

"Yale has always been pretty square about such things; perhaps she felt that she had to take some notice of the matter," answered Balford.

Jack leaned over Van's back and asked if he could see him for a moment. Van had not seen Jack enter, and started as he spoke and answered:

"Of course, old man."

"If you don't mind, Van, let's go up stairs where we can be alone."

"All right."

In one of the smaller library rooms, they found the desired privacy, and Jack began at once:

"Van, what do you know about my wife's sailing for Nassau?"

"Why, one of the fellows, I forget who, saw it in the papers and showed it to me. I went up and called on Mrs. Oswald's mother, and she told me that your wife was not well and the doctor had

ordered the change. She sailed the other day on the *El Capitan* with her maid."

"How long does it take to go to Nassau, Van?"

"About four days, I think. Let me see, she ought to be there to-morrow some time." Van Beuren was puzzled at the cross examination and felt sure that something was coming.

"Van, it has all been a horrid mistake."

"What do you mean, Jack?"

"I mean, Van, that that woman who separated Clare and me is dead—died to-night, and before dying confessed a story of lying, forgery and baseness which would be hardly credible had she not also left the proofs."

Then Oswald told connectedly the story of the message from Kitty and the interview. He showed Van the forged birth certificate and the blackmailing letter.

"Good Heavens, Jack, this is strange and romantic, too. What do you propose doing?"

"I don't know, Van; I want you to advise and help me. My first impulse was to go at once to Nassau, or wherever Clare is; then I thought it would be better to send a long cablegram. It is all so sudden that I can't think calmly."

Van Beuren sat for some moments in silence and then said:

"Jack, I had better go to Mrs. Lawrence first and explain the whole matter. I doubt even now if she knows exactly what separated you and Clare.

Then she and I can concoct a cable or letter, for perhaps a letter will do. It depends on the sailings, and you can follow the cable. I think the sailings are on Tuesdays. Yes, a cable would be best."

"Thank you, Van. That without doubt would be the best thing to do; can you say something from me in the cable?"

"By Jove, Jack, it does me good to see you coming back to yourself again, but you know I can't see Mrs. Lawrence until morning, so you must go home now and have a good sleep and quit worrying. It looks to me as though daylight was breaking at last for you both."

So the friends parted. Van Beuren called at the Lawrence house at ten the next morning, but was informed that Mrs. Lawrence would be out of town until three o'clock that afternoon. Jack received the news with considerable disappointment, but the prospect of having his dear wife and home once more was so rosy, that he could not conceal his happiness. The customers in the office, and fellow brokers on the floor of the exchange, wondered at the change, but no one knew the reason. Van Beuren said nothing when questioned, excepting that he was glad enough there was a change and that he hoped Jack would soon be himself again.

Jack and Van went up town together that afternoon shortly after the closing. Oswald was most impatient and insisted that Van should go at once to call on Mrs. Lawrence while he would go to the

club and wait there for news. So they parted at Twenty-third Street, Van taking an up-town car and Jack crossed to the club.

Oswald found a handful of members there, only a few of whom he knew, so he took a paper and settled himself in the corner furthest from the door. He had become so reserved and silent of late that his acquaintances, and even friends, left him alone. He tried to read, but Clare's face would come before the page. He ran over in his mind all about their coming meeting. He knew that Clare loved him still. Her respect for him had been shattered, her pride had been fearfully offended, but he had no more doubt of her loving him than of his existence at that moment.

A moralist would say that when respect goes, love at the same time takes wing, but it is not so with a woman who has thrown her whole life and soul into one love.

As Jack read, two men entered the reading room, whom he knew by sight merely. They sat on the sofa near by, and rang for a waiter.

"That was a nasty accident off Nassau, Tom."

"Yes, if reports are true. How many were lost?"

"The paper says six."

"It seems to have been criminal negligence on some one's part. They say the steamer was twenty odd miles out of her course."

"Yes, and no discipline, not enough life boats nor men, only nine or ten men before the mast, and an old reliable line like the Wall too; it's amazing."

At the first sentence Oswald lowered his paper and listened. "Off Nassau"—"Steamer"—"Wall Line."

A queer, creepy feeling began to run over his body. He got up and walked over to where all the papers lay.

He picked up the first edition of the *Evening Telegram*. He looked feverishly at the headings, but saw nothing. Rather than look further, he walked over to the sofa and said:

"I beg your pardon, but I overheard one of you say something about an accident to a Wall Line steamer near Nassau. Do you remember her name?"

"Yes, Mr. Oswald, the *El Capitan*."

An involuntary "My God," escaped Oswald's lips, as he snatched the paper from the little table.

It was an "Extra" *World*. The great headlines read:

"RAN ON A CORAL REEF SIXTY MILES OFF NASSAU."

"SIX LIVES KNOWN TO BE LOST."

"ONE CABIN PASSENGER AND FIVE CREW."

"NAMES OF LOST."

"MRS. JOHN OSWALD."

Oswald uttered a deep groan. He reached for support, but finding none, fell forward limp and livid in a confused mass, carrying table and glasses with him.

CHAPTER VI.

"WELL, what do you think of it?"

"Oh, it's all right and I am glad it's over. I had very grave doubts at one time whether it would really come to pass."

The first remark was addressed to Pierre Van Beuren by Ernest Balford. They were speaking of Jack Oswald's second marriage, which had just taken place, his marriage to Katherine Lowden.

Five years had passed since the events described in the previous chapters.

"Well, Jack will be happier and his new wife seems fond of him."

"Yes, he was undergoing a process of dry rot, as the carpenters say, but between you and me, I have always thought that Miss Lowden was influenced somewhat by a desire to get into society here."

"Who were they anyway—the name is not a New York one?"

"No, they came on here two years ago from Cincinnati. Père Lowden had made a fortune, a big one, I believe, in pork or lard, and, as usual, the ladies wanted a larger field for their social ambitions. They didn't make a howling success of it at first, but they have persevered and edged their way

along from one clique to another, until now they have quite a calling list."

"The young woman is distinctly stylish, as they say, and, but for a suspicion of loudness, would pass muster anywhere."

"Yes, and the old man knows enough to hold his tongue, but the mother would be a handicap anywhere."

"Where are they going to live?" asked Ernest.

"They haven't decided yet, but I heard to-day that Haswell is making up a party to go to the Mediterranean on his boat for the winter. I'm told she is a beauty, and he has asked Jack and his bride to join the party."

"Will he go, do you think?"

"Will *she* go, you mean. Jack is to be a passive personage in this new *ménage*."

"You mean that she has a forceful character?"

"Yes," answered Van Beuren, "that is a nice description, I think; very choice diction. I don't want to be uncharitable, but Jack introduced me to her when he first became engaged, and, although I am no mind reader, I think her general character is, as you put it, 'forceful.'"

"What a fearful tragedy his first marriage turned out."

"Yes, it *was* a tragedy, sure enough. Events heaped themselves together in such a short time, and in such lurid fashion. Good Lord! it was like a melodrama."

"Poor old man, he could scarcely be recognised now as that merry Jack Oswald of five and a half years back. Yet physically he is not much changed, a tinge of grey at his temples and in his moustache, and these only make him look more distinguished. There comes Haswell now."

"Take something, Charlie?"

"Thank you, I will. I hate champagne, and I drank the health of the bride and groom and all the Lowden family so many times this afternoon that my throat feels as dry as a cotton gin."

"Well, a cocktail would be the proper antidote," laughed Van Beuren. "By the way, I heard something of a yachting trip, Charles; no secret, I suppose?"

"No, that is partly what brought me out of my way to the club. When a fellow starts at Sixty-first Street to go to his rooms in Forty-fifth, and takes a route *via* the club in Twenty-fifth, it must mean something more than a drink."

"When you get entirely through with your peroration, let's have the story," said Balford.

"There is no story about it, but I want to know whether, if I make up a party to go to Egypt on the *Ailsa*, you two fellows will aid and abet with your presence. We would start now in three or four weeks, go by way of Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria, thence to Cairo, and up the Nile in a dahabeah, and so on."

"By Jove, Charlie, that is an awfully attractive programme ; are you serious?" said Van.

"Well, I should say it is attractive," echoed Balford.

"What would it cost, Charlie?" asked Van.

"Why, I have the boat and have already engaged the dahabeah, so all you fellows would have to spend would be what you wanted to lay out in curios and clothes."

"Holy smoke ! but I should love to go," said Balford ; "and you, Van, can you leave the whirl of Wall Street for so long a time?"

"I don't know about that, but I'll tell you fellows a small secret, which may have a bearing on my movements. Jack and I close our partnership on the first of January. We decided to do so some time since ; perfectly friendly, you know, but Jack didn't want to stay in the Street, and I shall go on alone. If we could liquidate a month earlier, I believe I would seriously contemplate the trip. I can start alone again in the Spring just as well."

"Good enough, and how about you, Ernest ; surely you could arrange it with nothing to do but cut coupons."

"I am going to try mighty hard. How long will you give us to decide?"

"Will a week do?"

"Surely ; I can tell in two or three days," answered Balford.

"I shall have to consult Jack first," said Van.

"As far as Jack goes," answered Charlie, "I don't think you need worry, for he is as anxious to have you go as I am."

"Well, leave the invitation open for a few days, will you?" asked Van.

"Of course I will; there will be a place for you any way. Besides Jack and his wife, I have asked Margaret Jones and Billie Brown and his sister. You know Billie, a not very heavy intellect, but a good boy who will run errands for the ladies and dress for the whole party."

"Yes, I know him. He is what you might call a pretty boy, but with all his little weaknesses, he is, *au fond*, a solid little chap," said Van.

"Sister is nice, too; queer she never married. She was a good catch and when younger must have been passably attractive."

"Yes, she will be a good balance wheel when something real devilish is proposed."

"When Billie calls for a 'lemon squash,' for instance."

"I don't think Billie would ever take anything as vulgar as that, do you, Van?" said Balford.

"Well, then it's settled that you will both try to fix it, and probably will," said Haswell. "Drop me a line here, if we don't meet; I'm off to Boston for a few days."

"All right."

Haswell had just received his beautiful steam yacht *Ailsa* from the Clyde. Thorough American

though he was, he still held that, whereas no one could build a sailing craft to equal the Americans, yet he yielded the palm to the English in the matter of steam vessels. He had spent a good deal of time and trouble on her fitting out. Her design had been left to Watson. On her trial she had made seventeen knots, and she had arrived at the Erie Basin only two days prior to the conversation detailed above. Her length was two hundred and twenty feet over all, with a nineteen-foot beam. Haswell proposed to start about the tenth of December, and, taking the southern route, stop at the Azores, thence to Gibraltar, possibly Tangiers, and then to Malta, and leaving his boat at Alexandria, go to Cairo and do the Nile trip. He knew that he would have no difficulty in finding guests, but he wished the kind who would be most congenial. So he had asked friends as unlike as possible. Jack, of course, he knew well; any one could get along with him. Jack's wife was an unknown quantity. Miss Jones was pretty, bright and harmless. In case of an accident, she would have been of less use than the ship's cat, but she was an old friend of his, or her parents were, and as she was always laughing, she would be good to drive off the blues. Billie Brown would just suit Margaret Jones. Miss Brown, her first name was Anne, not Annie, was an old maid, a very nice old maid, but prim and precise and easily shocked, and her younger brother, aware of this failing, took every

advantage of it. She was much older than he, having turned forty, while Billie was but twenty-five. Pierre Van Beuren was of the salt of the earth. Every one loved him. He was not good looking. His face sometimes had almost a comical look in its smooth-shaven lines. But beneath his unvarying *bonhomie* lay a stratum of seriousness and unflinching integrity. He was respected by all. He was a man to go to in trouble, for his judgment was sound. He had had his meed of success, too. He had never had an ambition to shine as a business man, as an executive officer, or as a philanthropist, yet he had been all of these, and with success, since his business career had been brilliant, and he had recently been, against his wish, placed at the head of one of the great charitable organizations of the city. He was unmarried at the age of forty-two, yet had he married at twenty-five he would have made a model husband. He loved his friends, but only went into society when he was obliged to do so. One might meet him occasionally at a dinner party at the home of a friend, at alumni meetings, or functions connected with corporations with which he was associated, but never at the Patriarchs' or Bachelors' balls. He was rather a man's man, but could make himself very agreeable to the women as well.

Balford was of quite another type. He was very handsome, and he knew it. He had a quiet and unobtrusive way of saying things, which, aided by

a low musical voice, went far with the other sex. He was born rich and had never worked hard, though at the beginning of his career he had to sit at a desk in his father's banking house and look over the correspondence. He dressed in the height of fashion and never did anything in excess. Altogether he was a good type of the idle New Yorker, a class not large, but unfortunately increasing.

The host, Haswell, was a rollicking, jolly, two-hundred-pound Harvard graduate, endowed with a great, generous heart and a long purse. He loved to see others enjoy his money. He loved the sea and had owned a fine schooner yacht, but tiring of it, had sold her. Now he had built the *Ailsa* and was to make his initial trip in her.

Margaret Jones and Katherine Lowden were great friends in spite of some disparity in years and a great difference in temperament. While Margaret was a distinct blonde with delicately chiselled features, pink and white skin, and petite figure, Katherine Oswald, as she must now be called, was tall, with jet-black hair and great, brown eyes. She had so long used the latter in subduing or trying to subdue unruly man, that the process had become second nature with her. She was languid in manner and somewhat drawling in voice. Her complexion was not very clear, but its defects were semi-concealed by the judicious application of powder and other aids. She was but little younger

than her husband and had seen much of the world and of people, and this fact accounted in a large measure for her marked influence over Margaret. She seemed to know all that one should know, and Margaret, an only child and closely guarded, was awed by the depth of Katherine's wisdom.

She had told Oswald about this wonderful friend of hers; "so clever and bright," she would say, "she knows everything." "That's rather a sweeping assertion, Margaret," Jack answered, "but I would like sometime to meet this feminine paragon."

It was Margaret who brought them together. She had decided that it would be a great thing to make a match, and had told Katherine what a catch Jack was—a man who knew every one, rich and with a most romantic history.

Katherine was at first languidly interested, but, after meeting him, she was decidedly *épris*. His sad face and quiet demeanour impressed her. She was a born flirt, and at once tried to make an impression. It was not easy at first. His studied politeness discouraged her, and his apparent indifference to all her blandishments angered her and stimulated her to her utmost. She had been accustomed to have younger men yield at once, and to have this man almost snub her, made her determined to bring him to her feet at all risk. She was a good actress, and so at last her eyes and smiles and purring proximity had the desired effect, and, almost before he knew it, Jack had proposed and

been accepted. She had grown to like him immensely. He was so different from any man she had ever met. She had no real love in her nature, but he got all that was there.

On his side, he thought her a very superior woman. She would preside at his table with dignity and would attract his friends to his home. He thought that he loved her, not as he had Clare, no, that was not possible, but with a mellow, wholesome affection, which would last and make life brighter. He was a bit flattered, too, that this attractive girl, with such a host of admirers always about her, should have singled out an old fossil, as he called himself, for a husband. He did not stop to analyse her attraction to other and younger men. He only saw that she was always the centre of a group, a planet with many satellites. She had accepted with enthusiasm the invitation to go on the cruise of the *Ailsa*. The invitation was received one afternoon some days before the wedding, while she and Margaret were looking over and arranging the presents, which had been placed in the billiard room on the third floor of the spacious Lowden mansion.

"Won't it be just ideal," began Katherine, "such a romantic commencement of our honeymoon? I hope Mr. Haswell has asked some nice men."

"Then you decide at once to accept," answered Margaret; "how do you know that Jack will want to go?"

"I fancy Jack will do about as I wish," with an emphasis on the personal pronoun.

"Well, as long as the men are gentlemen, which, of course, they will be, I don't suppose that you care who they are. You would probably spend most of your time behind the funnel, or mast, or life boats, with your hand in your husband's."

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind. When one marries, one stops all that kind of thing and becomes sensible. I might sit in some safe place, and allow some one else's husband to hold my hand. That would be more likely."

"Oh, Katherine, what a way to talk three days before your wedding."

"I mean it though; not anything wrong, you know, but these mild flirtations, if properly regulated, add spice to life, and I don't see why, simply because I'm married, I am to put myself, or be put, on the shelf."

"But if you love and respect your husband, I shouldn't think you would care for the marked attention of any one else."

"Well, our ideas differ. According to my code of morals, there is nothing wrong in having a little fun in this way. One can't eat beefsteak every day in the year."

"Well, Katherine, I think a great deal of what you say is mere talk, and you don't believe it yourself. As the cowboy says, you are talking through your sombrero. Who sent you that lovely vase?"

"Ernest Balford. Wasn't he a dear, and isn't he handsome? I wish Mr. Haswell would ask him to go along."

"Perhaps he has; they are warm friends, you know."

Just then Margaret's maid called for her. It was quite dark and the days had shortened so much that at five o'clock the street lamps were already lit. Margaret's maid had brought a note left at her home by a messenger. It was marked "Answer." She opened it at once, but before she read five lines, she cried out in joy :

"Oh, Katherine, I am invited, too."

"Invited where?"

"Why, to go on the cruise of the *Ailsa*. Mr. Haswell writes—let me see—'I have asked Mrs. Oswald-to-be and Miss Brown, so there will be two chaperones. The other guests probably will be Mr. Van Beuren and Mr. Balford and young Brown, all of whom you know. Now do persuade your parents to consent. Consult also with Miss Lowden.'"

"What a perfect duck Charlie Haswell is," exclaimed Katherine. "You *must* go, Margaret. I will see your people to-morrow and represent to them the immense benefit, both to body and mind, in such a trip, a liberal education in itself. So Balford has been asked. I hope he will go."

"And you will not follow out your *fin de siècle* ideas, will you, dear?" said Margaret.

"Oh, I don't think we will come into any collision over Ernest Balford, but people are thrown awfully close together on a trip of this kind."

"Well, dear, I will see you in the morning, and, after you have talked with Jack, and I with papa and mamma, we can make some definite plans. How perfectly delightful it would be! Good-night."

"Good-night, Margaret."

After Margaret had gone Katherine stood and thought. "So Balford is going; I wonder if Jack is jealous. I can't live without a little flirting—of course, not just at first, but Balford is so handsome, and then Jack is so slow; 'persuade Jack to go' indeed! Well, Kate Lowden, if you don't persuade him before day after to-morrow, there will be no wedding, that's all," and with a toss of her head she went down to her room to dress. Jack was expected for dinner, and she wished to see him before her father and mother could learn the news.

CHAPTER VII.

THE *Ailsa* lay at anchor off the foot of East Twenty-sixth Street. For some days she had been ready for her guests, and now at last, on Saturday, December 12th, her steam was up, the luggage aboard, and the living freight only was needed before she should weigh anchor and slip down the bay. She lay there like a great, white bird. It was just noon and Captain Burt, the skipper, had expected the party at eleven. He was anxiously pacing the little bridge, when a megaphone order from the shore stopped him :

"Captain Burt, send the launch to the landing."

"Aye, Aye, sir," he answered, and the mate was sent for the party.

A little later the crew were busy with the windlass and finally came the call :

"Anchor aweigh, sir."

Then the screws began to revolve and the graceful craft pointed her nose toward the Brooklyn Bridge and they were off.

The party were all very happy. Haswell was exuberant to the last degree, and, in his elephantine way, even tried to be funny. To Miss Brown's exclamation : "Oh, I wish I could look on both sides at once," he answers rather tenderly :

"What should you do with your eyes, Miss Brown?" Miss Brown blushed and answered:

"Why, Mr. Haswell, I don't know, I'm sure. What *should* I do?"

"Dot them," laughs Haswell.

"Look here, Charles; is that what you asked us for, to work off your grey-haired jokes on us? If so, land me at Bay Ridge, though, for Heaven's sake, don't take me at my word."

"Well, Ernest, I *will* land you if you say so, but, speaking of eyes, why shouldn't you dot yours?"

"Give it up, Charles."

"Why, because they are capital ones!"

"Don't mind him, Miss Brown, and enjoy the scenery, if you can after these antique witticisms. I fear Mr. Haswell has been drinking." This *sotto voce* as Haswell walks forward.

"Mr. Van Beuren, you don't really think that Mr. Haswell drinks to excess, do you? I have such a horror of any one who indulges in alcoholic stimulation; you know I am a member of the W. C. T. U. and—"

"Pshaw, Sister Anne, of course he has been drinking, any one can see it, and I don't blame him, on an occasion of this sort," said Billie, as he nudged Balford.

"If that is true, William, I am sorry, very sorry, for Mr. Haswell. I pity him and shall take my first opportunity to talk with him. I shall give him some of our pamphlets."

An ocean steamer, the *Teutonic*, was just passing, outward bound.

"Let's race them a little way," cried Mrs. Oswald, who, having gone below immediately upon coming on board, now reappeared in a most approved costume with long plaid ulster and jaunty yachting cap.

"We can keep up with them just a bit here," replied Haswell, who had rejoined the party, "but once they get down below, good-bye."

"We take another course any way, don't we?"

"Yes, we strike off to the southeast, while they go nearly east by north."

Lunch was announced by the steward. Mrs. Oswald sat at Haswell's right, Miss Brown at his left, "lest I might get too gay," as he explained afterwards, when Sister Anne was taking her usual siesta. Next to Katherine sat Balford, having Margaret at his right. Jack took the end opposite to Haswell and Van Beuren and Billie occupied the other two seats.

"How long does it take to the Azores?" asked Margaret.

"Well," answered Haswell, "that depends on the weather and how fast we go."

"Why, you astonish me," said Balford; "I didn't think the speed had anything to do with it."

"Oh, let up, Ernest, and give me a chance to finish my sentence. 'How fast we go' refers to the consumption of coal and the revolutions of the screw."

"You got out of that all right, Charlie," said Jack, speaking almost for the first time.

"Will it be very rough, Mr. Haswell?" asked Sister Anne modestly.

"I hope not, Miss Brown, and I trust divine Providence will grant us a smooth passage. Why, aren't you a good sailor?"

"Not very in rough weather."

"My sailing master tells me that on the way from Tory Island to Sandy Hook, the boat behaved beautifully. She does not roll, she acts as if on a pivot, so with head winds she pitches somewhat."

"Oh, yes," said Balford, "one of those delightful motions, where, when her bow has been mostly out of water, she dips her nose down into the sea and you leave all your internal economy up in the air somewhere."

After luncheon, all went on deck. The air was unseasonably mild for the middle of December, and the voyage was begun under most favourable auspices.

"Wouldn't you like to see the arrangement of the deck forward?" said Balford to Mrs. Oswald.

"Yes, indeed, this is almost the first steam yacht I have ever been on. I have seen lots of sailing boats, but my knowledge of steam yachts is very rudimentary."

They sauntered forward. Jack sat back in his comfortable chair, puffed his cigar and held a desultory conversation with Haswell.

"Well, old man," said the latter, "who would have thought, a year ago, that we three fellows would be here under these circumstances? The 'whirligig of time brings round strange things.' That is not a correct quotation but will do."

"Yes," replied Jack, "it is strange, and I tell you that I have felt better, mentally and physically, since we weighed anchor a few hours ago than in a long time."

"I am delighted to hear you say so, Jack. If you would get around again to your old self and take a real, live interest in things, why, I'd build a boat twice the size of this, and we'd circumnavigate the globe."

"Thank you, Charlie, for your big-hearted friendship. Look at those porpoises. Funny, how close they always come to steamers. I wonder if it's play, or whether they take the keel of the boat for some enormous leviathan. Hadn't we better call the ladies to see them?"

"Yes. Oh, Miss Jones, Miss Brown, come on deck and see a school of porpoises." Then, as the ladies, after a moment, appear: "What in the world were you doing below, with the weather so fine?"

"Oh, Miss Brown was writing letters home and wanted to ask me the names of some of the dishes we had at lunch."

"Writing home!" exclaimed Haswell, "goodness gracious! You won't see a mail box nor post-

office for two weeks or more. Miss Brown, you are not homesick already, are you?"

"Oh, no, but I want to remember all we do and say," answered Sister Anne apologetically.

"Sister Anne is probably writing to father and mother about my profanity: she overheard me saying 'damn' in my stateroom just now, when I pinched my finger in one of those patent basins of yours, Haswell," put in Billie, as he appeared in the companionway dressed in a bicycle suit of rather loud check with cap to match and rubber-soled shoes.

"How do you think I look?"

"Quite like a fashion plate, Billie, but where did you get that cravat; it would make Joseph's coat blush with envy."

"Oh, that's the latest London agony. You can put me on the bow at night for a headlight if you want—at ten dollars per night."

"Too expensive, and you might scare away the fair weather."

"Where is Katherine?" asked Jack.

"Why, she went forward with Balford a half-hour ago to inspect the boat," answered Haswell.

"Here, Van, don't snooze in the day time; wake up, and go forward and bring Mrs. Oswald and Masher Balford aft."

"Aye, Aye, sir," answered Van, as he touched his cap, and, yawning and stretching, moved off. He found the two leaning over the starboard rail,

behind one of the life boats, and apparently very much engrossed in each other. It gave honest, straightforward Van a little shock. He saw and heard nothing to make him explicitly uncomfortable, but the proximity of the two to each other, and their looks, as he approached unseen, made him feel uneasy. He coughed before coming very near and Katherine and Balford stood suddenly further apart. This was observed by Van. "Strange," he soliloquized, "Ernest is too good a friend of Jack's, too much of a man and gentleman, to stoop to flirtation with his friend's wife; no, I am mistaken, he was probably showing her some of the trinkets on his watch chain." So with a cheery voice he hails them:

"Commodore Haswell has sent me to escort you pair of runaways aft. Are you prepared to obey?"

"We come, we come," they answered, and all three sauntered back to where the balance of the party were seated. After a little badinage, the conversation turned upon love affairs and Margaret said:

"Oh, I say, Katherine, tell us something about it."

"I don't know that I relish that remark," answered Katherine. "Do you mean to imply that I am, through experience, versed in such things?"

"Oh, no, dear, but we all think that you may have had one or two *affaires du cœur* before Jack came on the carpet; don't we, Jack?"

"Yes," answered Jack, laughingly, "I am sure I was not the very first; nowadays the first love rarely marries the girl."

"No," replied Billie, "the man is often a beau at the receptions of her children, and sometimes marries one of them."

"When did you first fall in love, Mr. Brown?" asked Margaret.

"At six years of age and I have never quite recovered."

"How is that?"

"Why, I proposed in a cherry tree where my sweetheart and I had been spending the morning. She was so indignant that she pushed me off my perch. I was never well balanced and I suppose the cherries helped, but any way I fell and have never been quite the same since."

"Well, Mrs. Oswald," said Balford, "as you do not seem inclined to tell your experiences, I will give you one of mine."

"Oh, do," echoed a number of voices.

"It was long, long ago," began Ernest; "I was one of a house party. There were a number of girls in the party and of various types. There were tall and thin ones and short and stout ones, blondes and brunettes, but there was one who particularly impressed me. She was a pretty petite brunette with large brown eyes. But it was not her beauty that attracted me, it was something about her that I cannot explain, what the Italians call *sympatica*.

As I look back, perhaps she did not encourage me, but at the time I thought she did. I thought she desired my company more than that of any of the other men. I fell head over heels in love. It was a delight to be near her, to touch her hand, even in saying 'Good morning'; it sent a thrill through me."

"You must have been very young, Ernest," interrupted Billie.

"Be quiet, little boy, you don't understand such things. To make my story short, there was dancing one evening, and I had the happiness of dancing with Nell. She danced beautifully and I just lost my head and, in my frenzy, whispered in her ear, 'Nell, darling, I love you.' It was said. What did she do? She stopped right there and said with admirable sang froid: 'Why, Mr. Balford, don't you know that I am engaged?' 'Engaged!' I exclaimed, 'and you have never told me! You have treated me cruelly.' I left her as soon as possible and walked out into the night."

"Did you give her up?" asked Jack.

"No, the next day the papers announced her engagement to some man out West on a ranch. She was to live there for the rest of her life. I tried every means, fair and unfair, I must confess, to get her. I did not know the other fellow, and felt that since he had left temptation thus in my way, I had some right to try my chances."

"How was it that you did not win her?" came in Katherine's low voice.

"Well, she had some queer idea about honour. At one time, I think I nearly won her. She had not seen her fiancé for nearly a year and I had almost got her to promise to run away with me, when a letter came to her one day from the ranchman, saying he was just about to leave for the East. That finished my little day-dream and you see I have never married."

"You've told us a good story," said Haswell, "but you don't expect us to believe that you are one of those story-book, disappointed-in-love, never-marry men, do you? We are all sorry for you, however."

"No, I shall never marry," sighed Ernest, lugubriously.

"Your turn, Margaret."

"Oh, I have had no experience. Katherine has much more knowledge of such things."

"Miss Brown, you are shivering. Won't you have some hot-sotch or brandy and water?" said Haswell, turning toward Miss Brown.

"No, Mr. Haswell, I am quite comfortable, thank you."

"Oh, come, Sister Anne, take a little toddy; I've no doubt it is just as good as you get at home."

"William, I have never taken liquor in my life except under the doctor's orders and then only to save it."

"Save what, the liquor or your life?" answered Billie.

"You know very well what I mean; I am going down stairs," said his sister with arctic austerity.

"You mustn't say that, say 'going below,' " called her brother after her as Miss Brown disappeared.

"Do you always tease your sister this way?" asked Margaret.

"Oh, she doesn't mind it really, and it's great fun to shock her; I am studying character from faces, you know, and she is one of my most interesting subjects," answered Billie.

"You're incorrigible, but please don't try it on me."

"I should never dare to, Madam," answered Billie elegantly. "I am a humble creature and I know my place."

The following days passed uneventfully. The sea was smooth and they made excellent time. Shut in to themselves it was most natural that they should become very well acquainted.

Miss Brown or Sister Anne, as they had all learned to call her by this time, was very jolly, for her, but spent a great deal of her time below, reading up the Nile trip and studying the history of the temples and tombs of that wonderful valley. Every one but Jack had noticed the intimacy which had sprung up between Ernest and Katherine. If either were wanted, the others always knew where to find him or her, and if both were absent from the family circle, they could always be found together in some more or less secluded spot.

One evening just at dusk, Jack, wishing to ask his wife a question, and not finding her in the cabin or in the usual sitting place on deck, started to search for her. He walked the full length of both port and starboard decks in vain, and began to get anxious as to her whereabouts, when he thought of going way forward. He had on his yachting shoes and his step was unheard. He saw Katherine and Ernest sitting on a coil of ropes near the anchor. They were close together, very close, it seemed to Jack, as he approached from behind. He dismissed in an instant the ugly thought which flashed across his mind, and, thinking to startle his wife by putting his hands over her eyes, he drew nearer. But as he came closer he saw that her hand was in Balford's, and then Ernest raised it to his lips. Jack stopped short as if a shot had pierced his heart. He turned mechanically and walked away into the gathering darkness unobserved. He almost staggered to the companion way, like one dazed, and then went below. As he passed the saloon door Haswell hailed him :

"Come in and have a cocktail before dinner, Jack."

"Thank you, I will."

"Been on deck?"

"I took a turn or two—looks a little squally."

"Yes, Captain Burt says we shall have a thunder storm; funny in December, isn't it?"

"Oh, Charlie, would you mind asking the steward

to find my wife, and ask her to come down to our rooms? I've mislaid something and she can find it, I think."

"Certainly. Smith, find Mrs. Oswald; she's on deck somewhere, and tell her that Mr. Oswald would like to see her."

"All right, sir."

"Jack, you don't look quite well to-night. Are you feeling all right?"

"About as usual, old man, thanks," and Jack turned toward his own quarters.

Jack did not come to dinner. He sent word by Katherine that he was not quite well.

"Yes," said Haswell, "I knew Jack was not himself this evening; he didn't look right."

"Nothing serious, I hope, Mrs. Oswald?" said Sister Anne.

"Oh, I fancy he will be all right to-morrow; the salad at luncheon may have disagreed with him. I'm sure it is nothing serious."

"You're not looking as though you would do a song and dance either, Margaret," said Billie Brown.

"There you are again with your slang," answered the girl. "Why can't you talk as other people do?"

"You affect me very strangely. It's your fault."

"She doesn't affect your appetite," said Van Beuren.

"Why so silent, Ernest?" asked Van Beuren, presently.

"I was eating and thinking."

"Keep on with the first, but never think if you can help it; I don't," advised Van Beuren. "You looked just now like old Diogenes hunting for an honest man, or Sir Isaac Newton when he threw his watch in the fire and held the egg in his hand."

Long after dinner Oswald went on deck alone. The night was dark, and the wind, which had freshened, blew the inky clouds above the *Ailsa*. Jack had been walking for a long time—how long he did not know nor care. Katherine and he had had a talk in their rooms. He had said harder things than he thought he ever could say to a woman. Now that his eyes were opened, her words and actions all showed that she did not love him; nay, that it was not in her nature to love any man truly and constantly. But Ernest! his old friend—how could it be? What did it all mean? Was he born under an unlucky star? Was none of life's happiness to come to his lot?

The wind was howling wildly, fiercely, about him now. A damp mist began to sweep over the boat. Every now and then, as a wave struck her, she would shiver and shake as though about to be torn asunder. Jack thought it must have been on just such a night, five years ago, that poor Clare had gone out of his life forever.

"I wonder if it felt like this?" as another wave struck the *Ailsa*. "But she was brave through it all. They told me so." Another howl of the

freshening gale through the rigging. My God! could that be his name he heard called above the fury of the gathering storm, and far off there in the white foam? Did he see the boat capsize? Was that Clare with outstretched arms calling for him to come to her? A brilliant flash of lightning, a thunderous clap, and all was in darkness again, and Jack stumbled blindly below.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY on the morning of the 20th of December, with the sun trying to shine through a blinding gale of rain and mist, the *Ailsa* sighted the Azores. No one was on deck at the time, and none could have remained there long, for the gale had increased almost to a hurricane and the decks were awash most of the time. Captain Burt's orders had been to put in at Fayal, but this was now clearly impossible and, after he had gone below and consulted Haswell, it was decided to run on at half speed for Gibraltar. Even through the mist and rain, the Azores looked refreshing and welcome. Rico was quite close, and while its rugged peaks were out of sight in the clouds, yet lower down, patches of vivid green showed cultivation, and now and then a snowy cottage told that the island was peopled. Toward afternoon the gale moderated and, one by one, the party appeared in the saloon. All were greatly disappointed at not being able to visit Fayal, which they had heard was so quaint and picturesque, and now they were again on the broad ocean for five more days, with no land in sight. At last on Christmas day, a balmy sunny afternoon, they glided over the historic

waters of Trafalgar bay, rounded Cape Tarifa, and neared Gibraltar.

"How strange to be passing so peacefully over this great battle ground."

"When was that fight, Mr. Haswell," asked Margaret.

"I am not sure, but I should say it took place about 1805. It was at the time when Napoleon was contemplating the invasion of England, and when Nelson destroyed the fleets of France and Spain, it ruined forever the Emperor's chances regarding England."

"Why?" said Margaret.

"No frigates to protect his transports when taking the soldiers over."

"What a lot of relics there must be under here, skeletons, swords, guns and ammunition. What a mine for a curio store if they could only be got up."

"There! See, now you catch sight of the Rock of Gibraltar," said Van Beuren. "The name sounds as solid as the place itself, doesn't it?"

"And is that Africa over there to the right?" asked Sister Anne.

"Yes, Morocco and Tangiers, on the northwest point of the African coast."

"How narrow the opening to the Mediterranean is."

"Only about eight miles, I believe," said Balford.

"If England wants to, she can just shut up the whole sea. She has this place, and now practically

owns the Suez Canal, and then a few fortified places, coaling stations and so on, like Malta and Cyprus."

"I should think England would collect toll from every boat that goes through here," said Billie.

"Well, she may some day, but she will have to have a few arguments like Trafalgar before she does."

"I don't see how it is that England gets all these strongholds," said Margaret.

"Well, you know the Moors, or Saracens, first had the place, then Spain, and so back and forth, until it was taken from Spain by the Dutch and English fleets. If the French had won the battle of Trafalgar, I suppose Gibraltar would have passed to the French, after the English had held it just about a hundred years."

"It is certainly very impressive," said Jack; "it looks impregnable."

By this time the yacht had run into the harbour. The lights along the shore shone out like rows of fire-flies in the darkening twilight.

"Let's give up our celebration on board and go ashore and try to get up a Christmas dinner," suggested Haswell. "We can come back and have supper afterwards."

"Capital idea. Are there any hotels in the place?" asked Van Beuren.

"Oh, dear, yes, three or four; the Europa is the best, I believe."

So Smith was sent ashore in the launch to see what he could do, while the party sat about and conversed in the gathering gloom. They watched the signal lights flash up here and there, and could hear the bugle notes ring out on the still air the call to mess. It seemed very weird, very unnatural to most of them. The air was mild, mild as in mid-May at home. Sister Anne was excited over the expected mail, having carefully calculated that the *St. Paul* would deliver her mail bags at Southampton three days before their arrival at Gibraltar, and, that having left New York three days after the *Ailsa* she would bring the very latest news from home. So she saved her voluminous epistles for the inevitable P. S. Smith returned laden with a basket of oranges and many papers, but no letters. He brought word, too, that mine host of the Europa would have a dinner ready for his guests at seven-thirty.

They were all somewhat excited over the prospect of being on land again, and Billie in his exuberance and patriotism proposed to carry two American flags with him to show their nationality. The proposition was unanimously vetoed as being absurd and vulgar as well as quite unnecessary, and Billie felt hurt.

Four queer little carriages met them at the quay and they rattled through the narrow streets up to the Hotel Europa. The Spanish proprietor was awaiting them and, with many bows and obsequious washing of hands "with invisible soap in impercep-

tible water," welcomed them to his hostelry. They had a side table in the dining-room, which, though not spacious, was clean, and they were introduced to some new dishes, fresh sardines, boiled sweet potatoes with syrup over them, which tasted for all the world like *maron glacée*, and many other new delicacies. A great many bird cages hung about the room and their occupants carolled out a Christmas welcome to the strangers. Altogether the meal was very jolly, and when it was proposed to walk down to the boat afterward all acquiesced; thus it happened that Margaret and Billie went together and, after stopping at innumerable shops, at last found themselves lost.

"How stupid of you," exclaimed Margaret. "We may have to ask some of these soldiers the way, and they will take us for suspicious characters and lock us up."

"I wouldn't mind much if we were together," said Billie boldly.

"Well, *I* would, and if you want to retain a spark of the friendship that I have for you, and even that is rapidly cooling, you will take me to my friends."

"You are a little severe, Margaret, but I know, any idiot like me would know, that if we walk down the hill, we will reach the water, while you, like the Excelsior boy, seem to want to go higher."

"Well, then, you lead the way; it is getting to be positively immoral."

"Follow me, then," and he started down the steep street in a hurry. Nearing a corner he turned to speak to Margaret, and came into violent collision with some one, who at once seized him roughly, and demanded in a deep basso voice :

"What do you mean, sir, by running into me?"

The man was nearly six feet tall, but Billie answered quickly :

"You blood-thirsty villain! I'll show you what I mean. Come out here," moving to the middle of the narrow street. Margaret, with a little shriek, rushed between them, and, as they stepped into the light at the corner, Billie saw in his opponent none other than Van Beuren himself with the whole party close behind him.

"What a bantam rooster you are, Billie. We saw you coming and waited for you," said Katherine, after the laugh had subsided.

"Well, Margaret, I mean Miss Jones, insisted that the *Ailsa* was anchored on the top of that hill, and I couldn't persuade her out of it."

"Did you try hard?" asked Balford.

"Yes, I did, but we don't get on together, anyway."

"Come, let's go back to the boat," said Haswell; "we can do the town to-morrow. I have a letter or two that I must present, I suppose, though I hate to carry letters of introduction. They put a man to the necessity of showing you some attention and it doesn't seem fair."

Arrived at the boat, they immediately made preparation for a welsh rabbit supper. Haswell presided over one chafing dish, while Katherine took charge of the other.

After supper Jack went on deck and paced to and fro. Apparently the scene he had witnessed on deck had been forgotten. He and his wife were seemingly friendly, and in his heart he had forgiven Balford. He knew Ernest's very impressionable nature and believed he was led to commit an offense against his friend by the occasion and environment. He believed, too, that Ernest regretted having been led so far as to appear disloyal to him and subsequent events tended to show this, for Ernest had rather avoided Mrs. Oswald lately, though he could have known nothing of the husband's discovery of the flirtation. . . . The night was still. There was no moon, but the heavens were studded with brilliant stars. As Jack leaned over the rail, he thought of the exquisite words :

"The night has a thousand eyes
And the day but one—
Yet the light of the bright day dies,
With the dying sun.
The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one,
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done."

The following morning they started out sight-seeing. They chartered four carriages, and drove

first to Europa Point. Haswell and Katherine occupied one carriage, while Miss Brown and Van Beuren took another, the remaining vehicles being filled, respectively, by Ernest and Jack, who wanted to smoke, and by Margaret and Billie, who didn't. These two had patched up their differences of the night before, and were willing to sit together for a little while, provided, Margaret stipulated, "Mr. Brown would only speak when spoken to."

"What a *mélange* of nationalities and dress," exclaimed Katherine to Haswell.

"Yes, one sees Egyptian, Moors, Algerians, Jews and Singalese—then, of course, the various types of English, Scotch and Irish soldiery. It's a great place to study the nations. Very cosmopolitan, isn't it?"

"Why do so many different races gather here?"

"Why, I suppose because it is the great stopping place for all ships entering or leaving the Mediterranean, and all these picturesque people are vendors of some of the products of their native lands. They are here for business, not health."

"Oh, look at that brilliantly dressed fellow, with short, kilt skirt, which sticks out like a ballet costume, and his curved sword and embroidered jacket and queer cap. He is all in white."

"I think he must be a Greek or Macedonian. Driver, is that a Greek?"

"Si, Señor, he come far away," pointing toward the East.

They passed through the South Port gate and began to ascend the hill back of the Alameda. An old and dilapidated 'bus slowly toiled by. It contained three passengers, two Spanish peasant women, and a red-coated Tommy Atkins, all half asleep.

"Oh, look at the name on the 'bus," laughed Billie, pointing to the yellow vehicle and unhappy mule team. "'Paciencia,' that's Spanish for patience. Isn't that good?" and he called the attention of Jack and Ernest to the appropriately named stage.

"It reminds one of Fifth Avenue, doesn't it?" asked Billie.

"That is better, though," said Margaret, as a magnificent gold-laced officer galloped by on his fine charger.

They all stopped to look at the Wellington monument and enjoy the superb sea view.

The African coast was to be seen quite distinctly and the sailing boats that dot the water everywhere looked like toy craft as they skimmed, far below, over the intensely blue and sunlit waters.

They resumed their slow ascent. They passed the neatest little cottages, all embowered in flowers and semi-tropical foliage, perched quaintly on the steep side hill. The architecture was decidedly English, and on the stone gate posts at the entrance to each was the name of the place and occupant.

They passed, too, the mess houses and barracks at

the point, and turning, skirted the base of the great rock. The road was partially cut from the face of the precipice, and every now and again were seen the ancient watch towers, batteries and battlements of the Moors and the Spaniards, now all moss grown, and grey, and crumbling. Though told that, at this season, the monkeys are on the other side of the rock, yet they dismounted and walked up the narrow path to the monkey caves, and saw where the simians should have been.

Afterwards they started back for the yacht and lunch. On the way down, they looked at the big guns pointed toward the African coast, eight miles away. They passed two or three Spanish turkey herders, men with long, light sticks driving flocks of fowl ahead of them through the streets and street-lets. When a native passer-by wanted to buy he would seize a bird, feel it over, pay a few coins and carry it off, or throw it down again into the flock in disgust.

At lunch they decided to spend the afternoon in inspecting the galleries, and to drive over to the town of Algeciras in Spain. They also agreed to start the next day at noon for Malta. Sister Anne concluded not to make the afternoon trip, being afraid that she could not do justice to so much novelty in one day, and Haswell, having seen it all before, felt obliged to present his letters of introduction, so the other six started together. Smith

had gone ashore immediately after luncheon to engage a 'bus which would hold them all.

"I hope it won't be the *Paciencia*," said Van, "don't you, Billie?"

"Yes, indeed; that was the dirtiest looking conveyance I ever saw and we should all probably be obliged to disinfect before coming on board again."

"Careful, Billie, count ten now before you make another remark," said Margaret.

"Well, I declare, is there no freedom of speech on this boat?"

"Too much at times," said Sister Anne, as she excused herself from the table.

The men were smoking their cigarettes over their coffee and *crème de menthe*, and before they had finished an animated discussion as to why England was allowed to gobble up all the strategic positions in the world, Smith reappeared to announce that he had engaged the best 'bus in town for them.

They started slowly up the hill, admiring, as they moved along, the ancient Moorish castle on its side. Billie carried his camera, a bull's eye, and upon alighting at the entrance to the galleries, sauntered forward to take a picture of the ruin. As he was diligently trying to get the picture straight in his finder, a heavy hand descended on his shoulder and a severe voice said:

"Is that a photograph machine, sir?"

Billie turned angrily and saw a red-coated corporal towering over him.

"Yes, it is, and I want to know what you mean by laying your dirty hands on my shoulder."

"I mean that you will go to the guard house if you don't keep a civil tongue in your 'ead; come along to the sergeant."

Billie's patriotism and quick temper jumped to the front, but when Jack and Balford came up, the corporal, somewhat mollified, explained that the taking of photographs on the rock by amateurs, or others, constituted a penal offense. Billie calmed down and they all went before the superior officer. Billie's excuse of ignorance went for naught, and his precious camera was confiscated. His only consolation, however, was that Haswell, through his acquaintance with the officers of the post, might have it returned to him. His captors told him that, had he been English, he would have been locked up. As it was, he would be watched during his stay and another attempt at violation of the rules would be serious. They entered the galleries and soon forgot the trouble with the camera, in their wonder at this stupendous work.

A soldier acted as guide and after a generous tip became communicative and explained the guns and their management.

"Ye see, sir, a 'orse and wagon can drive through 'ere."

At intervals of twelve or fifteen yards were large apertures, each with a muzzle of a great gun pointing down on the bay, and, as in the ascent, they

rounded the corner were others commanding the neutral ground and the town of Algeciras, the gateway to Spain.

"And was all this tunnelled out of the solid rock?" asked Katherine.

"Oh, yes, mum, this is the lower gallery; but look through the port, way up yonder; do you see the holes winding way up to the top? That's the hupper gallery; but strangers can't go there."

"Wonderful, isn't it?" exclaimed Balford.

"Yes, the whole rock around is honeycombed," answered Van.

They came back to the entrance and started again. They drove to the neutral ground and Spain. As they came to the English boundary they were stopped by a sentry, spic and span in his red coat, white cartridge and bayonet belt, and dark blue trousers with small red cord. He wore a white helmet and his boots were as bright as a mirror. He allowed them to pass and they traversed the intervening space, perhaps two hundred yards in width, and passed the Spanish sentry, who was lolling on a bench. He was undersized, dirty looking, and smoking a cigarette.

"What a difference," said Margaret, "between these two men, and look! near each English sentry box you see a well-groomed soldier pacing eternally back and forth, but of all the six boxes on this side, only one seems to be tenanted, and see how he is guarding the frontier!"

They drove into the old town of Algeciras. The road was filthy with refuse and garbage, and the few soldiers were lying about asleep, or chatting with the peasant women, who passed in and out of the gates carrying their various wares to Gibraltar and returning. The odours and general appearance of the place were so uninviting that they soon turned and drove back to cleanliness and thrift.

"Isn't what we have seen indicative of the two races?" said Jack. "Spain is no longer a factor in the economy of nations. I doubt if she will ever come up again. The mere fact that in every town, even the size of this village, they must have their arena and bull fights, is sufficient commentary on the nation, to my mind."

"For my part," answered Margaret, "I cannot understand how women can go to those brutal exhibitions. I went once three or four years ago and on Sunday, too. It was at San Sabastian. I didn't faint, even though, within fifteen minutes, I had seen three horses gored to death."

"Meanwhile the women were applauding and having a fine time, I suppose," said Van Beuren.

"I suppose so. I came away or was taken away. I shall never forget it. We only went, you know, to say that we had been."

"Spain's decadence, I believe," said Jack, "is due to their false idea of chivalry and honour. They have failed to keep pace with modern progress and civilisation. They are still in the middle

ages, as it were. The great abyss between the classes is as deep and marked to-day as it was at the time of the Armada. Why, I've been told that it is exceptional to find a peasant who can even read or write. Think of that, when you apply it to the American farmer, or, now, even, to the Southern negro! Then, too, the priesthood are responsible for a great deal."

When they got back to the boat, they found a budget of letters. There was only one letter for Jack and this from his lawyer, telling him of the death, in California, of his uncle, Robert Oswald. This uncle, his father's only brother, had gone to the West as a young man. He had made a fortune and now left about one-half of it to his only nephew, the balance going to collateral relatives. The letter also stated that Jack need be in no hurry to come back on this account, as it would take some time to appraise the estate and settle with the heirs. Jack had never seen his uncle, so that his death was in no sense a blow. He was mildly pleased that he should come into possession of a large sum of money, but he would have been about as happy without it.

There was little news for the others to announce, as the letters were but three days later than the day of their departure.

After dinner they had some music. Margaret played the piano well, and Billie his guitar, but Jack complaining of hoarseness declined to sing.

Nevertheless, they had some good choruses and Billie sang "Tommy Atkins," "Alabama Coon," and other topical songs.

By noon the following day, they had finished coaling, and the *Ailsa* started down the bay, rounded Europa Point, and headed for Malta.

"Those are the pillars of Hercules, and the ancients thought them the extreme western boundary of the world," said Billie, as they left the gateway to the Mediterranean astern.

"What guide books have *you* been reading?" said Margaret saucily.

"Pshaw, any one who knows anything, knows that Gibraltar on one side and Ceuta Point on the other have always been called the Pillars of Hercules,—Miss Margaret, I am sometimes astonished at your—your poor memory—you, who have travelled so much—but pardon me, perhaps you were too young."

"Perhaps I was young then, but I am older now, old enough to box your ears if you go too far," said Margaret, and Billie chaffed her no more for the present.

CHAPTER IX.

"MAY I ask Mr. Oswald how long this is going to last ; how long I am to be treated with this studied politeness, which every one must notice and comment upon ? "

The words were spoken to Jack Oswald by his wife, in their rooms on board the *Ailsa*. They had been allotted two spacious connecting cabins, one of the largest suites on the boat.

"I was not aware that I had done anything to attract attention or comment," replied Jack.

"Yes, you have. Ever since that night when you say you saw Balford kiss my hand, you have acted like a brute. I don't propose to stand it longer. What did it amount to anyway ? A harmless little flirtation. You ought to be glad that I get a little attention from others, since I certainly get none from you."

"Katherine, there is an old Latin quotation which says: '*Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*,' and which, liberally translated, means that a husband or wife who is faithless or untrue in one thing, would probably stop at nothing."

"Do you mean to say that I am an immoral woman?" flashed Katherine, coming to his door and flashing her black eyes at him.

"I said and meant nothing of the kind. I now recognise the fact that you do not love me, did not when I married you. I do not think there is any possibility of love in your heart for any man. You live on vanity and the attention you may get from men, and you get attention by just such means as those used with my friend Balford."

"After that insulting speech, I can see no course for us but a separation. If you mean what you say of my character, you can have no respect for me, and I am very sure that I hate and despise you."

Katherine put all the venom of her nature into the last words. Ever since that night when he had discovered her flirtation with Balford, her husband had been a changed man toward her. He had tried to be natural, but found it impossible. On her side, she was only afraid that the others might notice the change, and her pride shrank back from this thought. To-night she had determined to have it out with him.

"I am more sorry than surprised to hear you say that, Katherine, for, of necessity, we must remain together for a time. We must appear to be at least friendly, and I think you will see the force of this necessity from whatever point of view you look at it."

"Very well, but after what you have said, there is no other course except a separation when we return home. Meanwhile you can go your way without let or hindrance and I will go mine."

"It shall be as you say," answered her husband, and left the cabin to go on deck.

They had been cruising now for two days along the African shore. To Sister Anne, it seemed safer to be within sight of land most of the time, in case of collision or striking a rock. They passed many vessels and steamers plying between Genoa, Naples, Brindisi and the ports of Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers.

"How sweet and considerate Jack is," said Margaret to Sister Anne, as they sat together one balmy afternoon alone on the deck. Both were engaged on some fancy work and the men were all below or lounging on the deck forward. Katherine was writing in her cabin.

"Yes, indeed, he is always thinking of others; what trouble he took this morning in marking out the shuffle-board squares for us, and then didn't play at all."

"He seems to see what you want and get it almost as soon as you think of it."

"And yet," said Sister Anne, "Mr. Oswald does not seem as happy or natural as at first."

"I have noticed that, too," answered Margaret. "I am afraid that he and Katherine don't get on very well, though I wouldn't say that to any one else. Katherine seems to prefer Ernest Balford's society, but he has rather avoided her of late, it seems to me."

"Oh, I hope nothing so terrible as an estrange-

ment could happen, Margaret. I should regret having come at all."

"Well, I must say, Sister Anne, that I do not like the way Katherine acts. Here is Jack now," and Margaret turned to him.

"Do you remember that day, Jack, on Long Island Sound—the day we played you such a joke about a fish?"

"While memory is with me I cannot forget it, Margaret."

"Well, wasn't it just such a day as this? I think the Sound looked just as blue and the Connecticut shore low-lying and hazy. I can close my eyes and see it all. How Will Stanton and the sailing master enjoyed the joke!"

"Tell me about it, Mr. Oswald, won't you?" asked Sister Anne.

Jack laughed.

"I had been trolling for blue fish for hours," he answered, "and had said I wouldn't give it up until I caught something. I had thrown myself down on the cushions and was nearly asleep; in fact, I must have dozed off. I was awakened by hearing the wicked Margaret saying to the sailing master: 'Captain, isn't that a school of fish?' I opened one eye and listened. It was so comfortable lying there in the sunlight and light breeze. 'Why, yes, Miss Jones, quite a lot in it, too.' With that I raised on one elbow and looked astern, and then leaping to my feet I cried: 'By Jove! I've got one, and a big

one at last,' and I began to haul in like mad. They all gathered around me, and Margaret kept saying: 'Isn't it a beauty?' You could see it splashing through the water way astern. When I had it nearly in I saw that it was a champagne bottle, and empty at that! They had fun with me for the balance of the day."

"It was a most unkind practical joke, Mr. Oswald, and I sympathise with you," laughed Sister Anne.

"Well, salt-water fellowship makes even practical jokes seem good," answered Jack.

That night they sat playing "hearts" in the main saloon. It was a bright starlight night, cloudless, but with no moon. Suddenly a whistle was heard, then the engine bell rang out the signal to stop, and then came three bells to back and there was considerable commotion on deck. A sense of impending danger came suddenly over the party, and, while the women looked at each other with blanched faces, the men rushed to the deck. As Haswell, in the lead, reached the door of the companionway, a crashing, splintering sound was heard, and the *Ailsa* careened over sharply, and then righted, as the hull of a great, black vessel swept by them, grating and scraping as she tore the paint and rail from their fastenings, and floated off astern. With an involuntary "Great God! we are in collision," Haswell grasped the rail and looked mechanically after the disappearing lights of the great, black

monster. Suddenly a cry rang out up forward: "Man overboard!" and in another instant they saw a form in the water almost beneath them. Without an instant's hesitation Jack Oswald threw off his coat, and shouting back: "Throw me a life preserver," jumped into the sea and struck out boldly for the struggling sailor. The *Ailsa* had by this time come to a full stop, and the men in the water were only a short distance astern. Two life preservers were thrown out to them, and the life-boat was hurriedly lowered. The women rushed up to the deck after the first fright had passed, and, whereas Margaret and Sister Anne were on the verge of hysterics, Katherine stood with impassive face, rigid and erect. "Where is my husband?" she called to the four men who had gone far astern.

"He is all right, Mrs. Oswald, or will be in a moment," shouted back Balford.

The sailor in the water, though a good swimmer, had been struck on the head and arm by a block and was partially stunned. Still he was made of good stuff, and, recovering slightly, had been able to keep his head above water until Jack reached him. The latter encouraged him, and, seizing him in the armpit, held him up until he felt his own strength giving way.

"Can you strike out now?" said Jack.

"No, sir, my right arm is broken, I think."

"Can you keep up until I get that life-preserver?"

"Yes, sir, I think so, but don't mind me."

Jack swam weakly toward the floating ring. He was glad to get it himself, but by using his legs with his remaining strength, for they were heavy with the weight of his shoes and trousers, he was able to propel the cork toward the sinking sailor.

"Cheer up, hold on; we are coming!" shouted the men in the life-boat.

Jack heard it and held on, but his strength was ebbing fast. He heard voices close to him and then, with the name "Clare" on his lips, he lost all consciousness of his surroundings. When he opened his eyes again he saw Van bending tenderly over him and heard his cheery voice.

"Now, old man, swallow some more of this elixir of life, and tell us all about it."

Katherine Oswald stood at the side of the couch, and, as Jack regained consciousness, she took his hand, patted it, and said:

"Brave Jack."

Soon, with the aid of rubbing, hot bottles and stimulants, Jack was quite himself again, but his self-constituted physicians decided that he must remain in bed for that night. They told him that he had saved the life of one of the crew, and how heroic he had been, but he met all their praise with a deprecatory gesture, and soon, as he became drowsy from the effects of his exertion and the hot drinks they had given him, he was left alone. In the saloon they discussed their narrow escape and the rescue of the sailor.

"What a glorious thing to do, to risk one's own life in trying to save another," said Billie.

"Yes, but why should Jack Oswald risk his life in trying to save a common sailor," asked Katherine.

"Ah, Mrs. Oswald, there is the nobility of the whole thing. I am sure that what ran through Jack's mind, beyond the quickness of thought, was something like this: 'A fellow-man in danger of drowning; I am a good swimmer. He must be saved.' He never thought, no, not for a second: 'He is only a sailor, my life is worth more than his; what is the use?' He just threw off his coat and plunged in, and he didn't take long about it either, did he, Ernest?" said Van.

"I should say not. I tried to stop him, I confess; of course, I didn't know that Anderson had broken his arm, and I remembered, Charlie, that you once said, long ago, that you never would have a sailor aboard who couldn't swim."

"It was the noble act of a noble man," said Balford. "I have always admired Jack, but it takes an occasion like this to show up the true nature of a man."

"Well, if my hair isn't snowy white to-morrow morning, I shall be surprised," said Margaret. "I am so upset, I am trembling still."

"How can you be trembling still?" said Billie, trying to be facetious and as well to change the line of their thought. "Trembling, in itself, implies motion. How, then, can you be trembling still?"

"Mr. Brown, your witticisms are, to say the least, ill timed," answered Margaret haughtily.

"Well, I don't see why we shouldn't all be jolly now, do you? We have had a collision, lost a man overboard, saved him, and experienced no serious damage ourselves."

"No, *you* have not. You haven't even disarranged your necktie. '*We* have lost a man overboard, and *we* have saved him.' Oh, the presumption of some people!"

"Well, if I have made you indignant, or angry, I have accomplished something. You looked so scared just now that I wanted to do something to change matters."

Haswell had been sitting quiet for a long time. He was very sorry for the accident, for he reasoned, and rightly, that it would destroy all confidence in his boat and its crew. Nothing, he felt, could be said which would restore their trust. He was glad that they would reach Malta the following evening, and then on to Alexandria, where they would leave the boat and be on shore for a couple of months, by which time they would have forgotten the untoward accident.

"I can't tell you," he said finally to his guests, "how much I regret this unfortunate accident. From my investigation, I cannot believe that it was our fault, but what I most fear is that you may lose confidence in the seamanship of my sailing master and crew. We shall reach Malta to-morrow, I hope,

and from there to Alexandria is not far ; then we shall be ashore for some time and I hope we shall all forget this incident."

"Now, Charlie, don't take things hard. I feel sure that I speak for all when I say, we feel that it was an unavoidable accident, and as it has turned out so harmless, we shall all forget it and sleep none the less soundly to-night nor have any anxiety in the future." So saying, Van Beuren raised his glass and added : "I drink to our host and his gallant guest, Jack Oswald."

"I am quite unstrung, Mr. Haswell, and I think I will retire," said Sister Anne, making the first start. And so the little party scattered for the night.

Toward sunset on the following day the *Ailsa* entered the harbour of Malta. To most of the party, the name Malta was full of mysticism ; an odour of the middle ages and before was about it. And a strange place it is, too. The old battlements, with drawbridge and portcullis, built on a bleak and barren rock, are there, with still a few quaint old buildings amongst the new. Some of the old customs and costumes persist yet and the sirocco from the desert is always there in Summer, but Malta in the Winter, once the ponderous fortifications are passed, reminds one only of Italy.

On the morning following their arrival, Van Beuren secured a boatman to carry them to the landing. Once there, they took two landaus, which looked as though they might have seen service dur-

ing the Crusades, and drove up to the town. The women wished to buy some real Maltese lace and the men to see the fortifications. So they divided, Billie taking the three ladies, while Haswell, Jack, Balford and Van Beuren made a tour of the town. The language was a patois of Italian and Arabic, and so any conversation with their driver, who understood no English, was a difficult task. Therefore this latter personage exercised his own untrammelled will as to such points of interest as he thought his party should see. He took them to the magnificent cathedral, thence to the English church, from the gardens of which they looked down upon the fine land-locked harbour, dotted with English battle-ships, cruisers and torpedo boats, while the great guns mounted on the ramparts all around gave the place a stern and warlike aspect.

On the way back to the boat, they met the ladies with their escort, and on reaching the *Ailsa*, the purchases of lace and filagree work were exhibited and admired.

"If Captain Burt can get his supplies this afternoon, what do you say to our pushing on to Alexandria?" asked Haswell, as they sat at lunch.

All agreed to the proposal. As a matter of fact, most of them were anxious to leave the boat for a time. The accident two days before had made them all a little nervous and Haswell had not failed to notice it. In the afternoon most of the party went ashore for another drive, only Haswell and Sister

Anne remaining on board. It had happened now, quite often, that these two had been left together alone.

After the others had gone, and he had finished his writing, Haswell came up and joined Sister Anne on deck.

"How industrious you are, Miss Brown," he said, sitting down beside her.

"Yes, I always try to be busy. You know the old saying about the devil and idle hands and mischief."

"Yes, perfectly, but I don't think the devil could do any business on this boat, do you?"

"Oh, no, I did not mean to apply the old saying to anybody or anything in particular, Mr. Haswell."

"You have never thought of marrying, have you, Miss Brown?"

Sister Anne started convulsively. "It's coming; I knew it would. Oh, why did I stay alone with him!" she thought. She was blushing now, and her fancy work dropped at her feet. Haswell bent to recover it for her.

"Because," added he lazily. "I have a delicate matter of this kind on my mind and I would like some friendly advice. A friend of mine, of mature years, is head over heels in love. He does not know what to do in the matter. He is very proud and dislikes to bring a refusal upon himself, yet the uncertainty is driving him wild."

"The poor fellow! I did not know I had encour-

aged him so much. I wonder if it will effect his future life," thought Sister Anne.

"By the way, Miss Brown," continued Haswell, "you know him, I fancy—Fred Jones; he writes me a doleful tale all about his trouble."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Brown with a decided touch of disappointment in her voice.

"Yes, I am violating no confidence in telling you his name, as long as I say nothing of the woman in the question. Fred, you know, wears his heart on his sleeve, and is always more or less in love, but now, at the age of forty or past, he seems to be really hard hit."

"My experience, Mr. Haswell, in such matters is limited, and derived mostly from books, you know, but it seems to me that a man ought to be able to tell whether the lady is partial to him or not, and brave enough to ask the question and settle his fate."

"Well, I imagine Fred wanted to talk or write to some one, and probably felt better after it was done. I shall wait awhile before answering his letter. There come our people."

For two more days they skirted the low-lying coast of Tripoli, now being out of sight of land and again coming quite close—close enough to make out the graceful palm trees along the shore. On the third day they could see in the offing the great light-house at the entrance to the bay of Alexandria.

"There is Egypt," shouted Haswell, as he took down his marine glasses and handed them to Jack.

"Oh, yes," cried Margaret, "and that is the modern Pharos of Alexandria. I wonder if the old one stood there?"

"There, or near there," replied Jack. "It was an island in the old days, I think."

As they approached the long breakwater, a peculiar-looking sailboat approached them. It had the short, stout mast well forward, with the long slender boom balanced and lashed to it, and the large triangular sail of all Egyptian boats. In the stern and steering, sat the old white-bearded sheik, with long black gown, white turban, and the red tarbouche, or fez, showing in the centre.

"Doesn't that look biblical? The patriarchal old fellow looks as though he were taken out of a picture book. What does he want, Mr. Haswell?" asked Katherine.

"He is the pilot; we shall have to stop and take him aboard. The channel is very tortuous from here to the pier, although the distance is short."

The boat came alongside and the pilot climbed up the rope ladder with surprising agility for an old man. Then the boat sheered off and the *Ailsa* began to move again.

All the guests had been busy for hours previous with their baggage, sorting winter from summer clothing, and packing away what they would leave behind. Soon they anchored close to the great

stone quay and were quickly surrounded with felucca crowded with swarthy Arabs, and repulsive-looking Greeks, all with something to sell. It was a very heterogeneous crowd. Suddenly a felucca, much better looking than the rest, made its way through the boats. A handsome man stood in the stern and laid about him, right and left, with a stout hide whip which he carried in his hand. The boats parted like magic. Like whipped dogs, the natives scrambled to get out of reach. But it was only Selim, the dragoman, who had been engaged by Haswell to take charge of the party in Cairo and up the Nile.

As the boat came closer, they could not help but admire him. He was a Syrian, from Beyreuth, and had received a liberal education in the American College at that place. He spoke English excellently, and of course Arabic was his native tongue. A smattering of French and of Italian made it possible for him to go anywhere in Cairo and Alexandria and make himself understood. As he stepped on the deck, he was a striking picture. His costume consisted of an electric-blue garment reaching to his ankles, and elaborately embroidered with a darker blue, fine silk braid, in a pattern somewhat military. One side overlapped the other, and a silk sash of many colours held it at the waist. His head was covered with the ever-present red tarbouche, with black tassel, and his legs were encased in highly polished, tan-coloured top boots. His face was

deeply tanned and set off by a carefully kept, curving moustache. His manners, as he doffed his hat, were those of a gentleman.

‘Is Mr. Haswell here?’ he asked.

‘Yes I am Mr. Haswell.’

‘I am your dragoman, sir,’ answered Selim, producing at the same time his credentials, including Haswell’s letter to Cook & Sons, from the folds of his garment.

‘Ah, and your name, then, is Selim?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Well, Selim, we want to go up to Cairo as soon as possible. How do the trains run?’

‘There is one, sir, at four-thirty, arriving at Cairo at about seven.’

‘Do you know whether our rooms are engaged at Shepherd’s?’

‘Yes, sir, they have been waiting for you for three or four days.’

‘Are there many strangers in Cairo this winter?’

‘Oh, yes, sir, a great many, and many Americans.’

‘What is it like here to meet some one we know?’ said Margaret.

‘The Clintons ought to reach here about this time,’ said Katherine.

‘Do you mean Mr. Robert Clinton, my lady?’

‘Yes. Do you know them?’

"Yes, my lady, I have just left them to come to you. They are at the Ghezireh Palace Hotel."

"Good! How long have they been there?"

"They came from India on the *Caledonia* about three weeks ago."

"And are the young ladies well?"

"Yes, my lady; Miss Ethel climbed to the top of the pyramid a few days ago."

Two hours later they were speeding toward Cairo. They had secured the large compartment in the railway carriage, and all eight had crowded into a compartment for six.

Until darkness came, they watched from the windows the new and strange phases of life presented to their view and in the various villages through which they passed. At a few minutes after seven, they were landed at the Central Station in Cairo, and were thence hurried, amidst a bewildering confusion of tongues and snapping of whips, to that world-renowned caravansery, Shepherd's Hotel.

CHAPTER X.

THERE is Cairo the old and Cairo the new. Cairo the old is the unchanged Cairo of a thousand years. Cairo the new is a modern city ; Turkish and arabesque in architecture, it is true, but modern in its broad and watered streets, its well-kept lawns, and in the general entourage of its residences. The old and the new lie side by side, separated by a partition, as it were—the Esbekyeh Gardens. Strictly speaking, however, we should refer to New Cairo, Old Cairo, and Oldest Cairo to the west of the city, the ancient fortress of Babylon.

The party from the *Ailsa* ascended the broad steps leading to the extensive terrace in front of Shepherd's Hotel. Everything seemed too modern to them at first. Many people were sitting at the small tables, under the garish glare of a dozen electric lamps, and, as they entered the hotel, the smiling manager, dressed in the most approved continental costume, met them. They did not stop to remember that Shepherd's is the very centre of European Cairo. It is as well, perhaps, for one visiting Egypt for the first time to become disillusionized in this way. It prepares one for the real after enjoyment of the novel sights and sounds

of the real Egypt—the Egypt that has never changed and never will.

They passed up the spacious stairway, flanked on either side by two statues of generously proportioned Nubian ladies in bathing costume, and, after visiting their rooms, all assembled in the great hall, and when the forces were marshalled, proceeded to the restaurant. As they seated themselves, Haswell looked about him.

"Really, isn't this room a revelation?" he observed. "It is all so different from what I had pictured in my mind."

"Indeed it is," answered Margaret; "the room is like any handsome restaurant anywhere in the Egyptian style, and the waiters are all Europeans, and the cooking French."

"Did you notice, though, the crowd of turbaned and quaintly-dressed people on the sidewalk as we came in?" asked Balford.

"Yes, they looked like the supernumeraries in a theatrical show."

"Well, we must not form our ideas of Egypt by a superficial glance at Shepherd's Hotel, surely," said Van Beuren.

"I'm crazy to see a dahabeah, aren't you, Margaret?"

"Yes, I am, Katherine; the very name sounds poetical and ancient."

"You ladies must not be too impatient. I want to have our boat arranged in my own way before

you go aboard, and then we can change it to suit the feminine idea, for you must remember it's to be our house and home for two whole months."

"What's her name?"

"The *Ammon-Ra*, Great King of all the Egyptian Gods. I hope his divinity will keep good watch and ward over us, and bring us back as good friends as we are now, for it is a great strain on all the cardinal virtues, you know, for people to be boxed up so closely for so long a time."

"I won't quarrel with any one, I promise you," said Billie.

"Nor I," echoed Margaret.

"Well, you two don't count anyway; your bickerings are like a dash of tabasco to an unflavoured soup," said Van.

"Thank you," answered Billie; "tabasco is positive enough, so I take that as a compliment, don't you, Margaret?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. Mr. Van Beuren is so old and prosaic that he needs some stimulation."

"Otherwise I shouldn't take any interest in your childish amusements, I suppose," laughed Van.

After dinner they wandered out into the spacious corridors, drank their coffee and smoked the delicious Egyptian cigarettes, and Jack brought them the *Gazette and Sphinx*, from which they gleaned the latest news of Cairo and the outside world. Haswell met two Englishmen, one of whom he had run across on some of his previous travels, and he

brought them to the ladies and introduced them, Mr. Villiers and young Lord Annersley. They were on their way back from Somaliland, where they had been hunting lions and elephants. They were to go up the Nile, they said, in a few days, with an English friend, Sir John and Lady Wiltshire, or rather to meet them at Assiut, for the party had already started.

Young Annersley seemed quite taken with Margaret, and spent a full hour talking with her. At last, however, Katherine suggested good-night as it was getting late, and the women withdrew, while the men adjourned to the American bar for a night-cap and a bite.

"So you are going up the river," said Haswell. "I'm glad to hear it. We expect to start in a week, and we shall probably see a lot of each other. Funny, my meeting you here, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Villiers, "do you recollect where we first met?"

"Perfectly; it was in Japan, between Kobe and Yokohama on the train. Yes, it was at Nagoya, I remember now, by Jove! How furious we all were about it. You wanted something to drink, soda or something, and enquired of the guard, in alleged Japanese, where to get it, and off you sauntered. The train was held for about fifteen minutes for you, and when you reappeared in the distance, nothing could hurry you. You strolled back and stepped leisurely on the train, as though it was your own private conveyance."

Villiers laughed. "I had forgotten all that."

"Well, it is just as he behaves now," put in Annersley; "I can appreciate your feelings."

"We made a few very pertinent remarks that day on the train, about you, I can swear to that."

"What's the name of your dahabeah, Mr. Villiers?" asked Jack after a pause.

"The *Kinct-el-Nil*; Queen of the Nile, it means in English."

"Oh, I have heard of her; she belongs to some Russian or private individual, doesn't she?" asked Haswell.

"Yes, I believe she was built originally for the Khedive's mother, but was sold and passed through a number of hands since. She is a fine boat of the kind, I believe."

"Large party?" asked Billie curiously.

"No, no one but Wiltshire, his wife and a companion."

"What a jolly time you will have."

"Yes, we hope to. Wiltshire, you know, is very fond of shooting, has his moors in Scotland, and all that, and hopes to give us some sport, but I have never heard of much of that kind of thing here, have you?"

"Yes, they get ducks and snipe and quail in season, I believe."

"Well, I'm going to turn in," said Van, yawning. "Good-night."

"It's time for all of us, isn't it?" added Annersley, and the party broke up.

The next morning at nine o'clock they all started out to see the pyramids. Selim had engaged two donkeys, one for Margaret and one for Billie. The rest were content with two open carriages. The names of the donkeys were Mary Anderson and General Grant. Had English people bestrode them, the names would doubtless have been changed at once to Ellen Terry and Gladstone. The Egyptian donkey boy is very adaptable. They passed up Kamel Street and turned abruptly to the right opposite the great monument to Ibrahim Pasha, and then, after passing the English Embassy and the Hotel Continental, they took the direct road, Kasr-el-Nil, and brought up at the new bridge. Everything was modern on the way. But upon passing over, the scene changed. Sitting clustered at the far side they passed a dozen Egyptian Syce, men employed as forerunners to the carriages, or traps, of the richer inhabitants. Fine muscular fellows they were, in a most picturesque costume.

Their legs were bare and brown. They wore full, white Zouave trousers, with white shirts, the latter covered by a Zouave jacket of brilliant red or green, covered with gold or silver embroidery. A red silk sash was wound about the forehead holding the fez in place. Each Syce carried a white wand or stick, and as they ran in perfect step, about forty yards in front of the carriage, their sonorous cries warned pedestrians, camels and donkeys to move aside and allow Mr. or Mrs. Somebody the right of way.

As they passed to the second bridge, Katherine exclaimed :

"Just look at that string of camels, there must be thirty."

"Yes, and see how they are fastened one to another with that loose rope. What are they carrying in those net-work paniers? Why, it's stone and bricks! How primitive!"

"How supercilious they look; they seem just as though they were saying: 'You poor modern products, look at *us*, we represent thousands of centuries, bygone ages more in years than days of your life.'"

"They have a most haughty bearing, haven't they, Jack?" said Balford.

"Yes, they haven't the appearance of being 'meek and mild,' and I think they must be ugly at times, for you see some of them have plaited muzzles over the nose."

"Our Billie won't suffer from liver complaint for some time, I think," said Van. "Just see how General Grant is shaking him up. Margaret's steed is a rocking horse compared with the General."

"Oh, look, did you ever see anything so funny?" cried Sister Anne, as she pointed to an enormous bunch of freshly cut grass which was moving by them. The head and ears of a patient donkey were visible in front, four little mincing feet below, and the suspicion of a tail behind. Contentedly squatted on top of all was one of the fellaheen, in bright

blue gown and white capote, industriously munching a stick of sugar cane.

"Why, that lazy brute weighs as much as the donkey," said Van as they looked after it.

"That's the way in Egypt ; the Pasha orders the Bey about, the Bey beats the Effendi, and the Effendi maltreats the fellah, and the fellaheen can get square only by abusing their donkeys or camels. If there were a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals in Egypt, and they arrested all offenders, there would be no work done in town or field, but I believe it is not so bad as it was. In fact, I have read somewhere that the foreigners have started a society of this kind," answered Haswell.

"Look, look, there are the pyramids!" and Katherine, from the back seat, stood and pointed through the acacia trees, and there, in the distant blue haze, most of them had their first view of these symmetrical sepulchres of the dead. They had now turned into the long, straight five-mile road lined with acacias and flanked on either side by fields of waving grass and grain.

Dykes and ditches abound, and the white heron and vulture were constantly flying across the road in front, while the curiously coloured Egyptian crow croaked out his hoarse welcome as they clattered by.

They decided to leave the carriages at the Mena House, that comfortable and salubrious hostelry, and walk or take camels up to the base of the great pile. Billie and Margaret, surrounded by a horde

of Bedouin Arabs, had already gone on. As Selim remained with the carriages, the Bedouins knew themselves free from all restraint, and bothered the young people with requests to buy the hundred and one spurious relics which they produced from the folds of their garments. Billie longed for the balance of the party to join them, and it was not long before all were standing together at the foot of the colossal pile. Lost in wonder, they could say nothing. They visited the Sphinx, too, that grim and silent guardian of the plains. Billie secured his camera from Selim and, amid forceful threats and protests, obtained some good pictures of Sister Anne on a camel.

"They will sell well in New York," he said.

The rest of the party were convulsed with laughter, for the picture of Sister Anne in her quaint costume, with frightened face, perched high in air on her dromedary, the pyramids as a background, presented an opportunity which her brother, who had a strong sense of the ridiculous, was quick to seize.

Billie insisted on leading his donkey back and making the third on a seat in the carriage, pleading that considerable of his anatomy was hopelessly gone and his internal economy shifted about so that he felt his heart beat on the right side.

They arrived at the hotel at four o'clock, and found that the Clinton family had called during their absence, but they telephoned to the Ghezireh

Palace Hotel and invited them all to take tea on Shepherd's verandah at five. The young ladies accepted. Ethel and Mary Clinton were types of New York girls of the period. Ethel, who was three years the elder, had, at the age of twenty, a very blasé and independent manner, and while undeniably pretty, was of so positive a nature that she made but few real friends. Her younger sister, Mary, was only seventeen, but a very lovely, quiet girl. Retiring always in favour of her sister, she looked up to her as the embodiment of all that was good and admirable. The elder was one to admire from afar. The younger was one to fall in love with.

At five o'clock the English band was playing in the garden, and tea and cake was being served on the terrace. The Haswell party had secured a good table, and were watching the changing panorama of people and things. A blue-gowned Arab held up to view, from the sidewalk, a lot of donkey chains in blue beads and tinkling brass coins. A black-gowned Bedouin with snowy turban untied his bandanna kerchief to exhibit his real scarabs at only a few piastres each ! A troop of Indian fakirs held up a slimy cobra and wanted to make a mangoe tree grow from the sidewalk while you wait.

After fifteen minutes or so, a smart victoria drove up. The coachman was clad in light grey and wore a red tarbouche. Beside him on the box sat the Clinton's dragoman and the two ladies on the back seat were the Clinton girls.

Van and Balford hurried forward to meet them, and in a few moments the greetings were over and conversation had dropped into the natural channel of gossip and personality.

"Where are Mr. and Mrs. Oswald ; aren't they with your party ?"

"Oh, yes, they went shopping a little while ago ; they ought to be back by this time," said Margaret.

All were invited out to the Ghezireh Palace for the following afternoon, to hear the music and have a cup of tea. At last, just as the lights began to blink out on the soft, dry air, the Clinton girls said good-night and drove off.

The following week was spent in seeing the sights. They went up to the citadel and inspected the great mosque of Mahomet Ali. They saw where the Mamelukes were massacred. Then they visited a dozen smaller mosques, less pretentious but more antique. Selim took them through the streets of old Cairo on foot and they walked the full length of the Muski. On Tuesday they went to see the dancing Dervishes and on Friday to see the howling Dervishes. They drove to Heliopolis and saw the obelisk. They spent two mornings at the Gizeh Museum. They studied the mummies of the Pharaohs. They saw the superb jewelry recently exhumed and Van remarked :

"Truly, there is nothing new under the sun."

"Except the safety bicycle and the telephone," added Billie.

"Well, how do we know that they didn't utilize electricity?" answered Van.

"How do you suppose they did these things, this moving of immense masses of stone hundreds of miles?"

"It beggars thought," said Jack.

Saturday had been appointed as the day to visit the dahabeah. At eleven o'clock they all drove over to Bulak, where the boat was. The *Ammon-Ra* had been towed out into the stream a bit, so they had to be ferried to her in small boats.

"And is that a typical dahabeah?" asked Margaret, as they approached her.

"Yes, a type of the dahabeah of to-day. Very likely they were somewhat different in Cleopatra's time," answered Haswell.

They clambered over the rail of the lower deck, which occupied about a fifth of the forward part of the craft, and they ascended a flight of stairs on either side to the main deck and parlour of the boat. It was completely canopied with bright Arabian hangings of every colour. The deck had been transformed into a most attractive room. The floor was covered with soft rugs. An upright piano in one corner, and two divans, with tables and chairs, and palms and flowers, made the deck look most inviting and oriental.

The ladies were delighted, and when John, the steward, had brought up some steaming tea and cakes on a brass tray, and Ali, his assistant, had

opened the soda, they all voted that their future home was a great success. A little later they went down to inspect the sleeping rooms and main cabin or saloon. These were all above the water. The dining-room was the full width of the boat. It was very large and fitted up in arabesque hangings and furniture. The rooms were of good size, some en suite and others single.

"Now, everybody, will you be ready to start up the river on Monday at noon?" asked Haswell.

"We will," answered the other voices.

"Then it is settled, Selim, that we lunch on board, and start as soon after noon as possible."

"Very good, sir."

They all drove back to the hotel delighted with what they had seen. Van and Balford, however, were sent over to the Ghezireh Palace to ask the Clintons to take tea on the *Ammon-Ra* the following day, Sunday.

On Monday morning early, the crew of the *Ammon-Ra*, eleven in number, were busily engaged in transporting the luggage and belongings of Haswell and Company from the hotel to the boat, and at one o'clock the *Ammon-Ra* herself pointed her nose up stream and, with a favourable but light breeze, began to force her way against a three-mile current at a three and one-half mile gait, and the Americans had started for Assouan, five hundred and eighty miles south.

CHAPTER XI.

"WELL, Miss Jones, I am glad to say that it isn't broken."

So spoke Dr. Van Rennsalaer, as he held Margaret's pretty, swollen ankle in his hand, after a long and presumably exhaustive examination of her injury.

They had reached Abydos, or rather Balianeh, the night before, and, after the *Ammon-Ra* had tied up at the bank, Selim informed them that there was another dahabeah, flying the American flag, directly in front of their boat. Of course, this fact caused them all to speculate as to the name of the boat, and the identity of their countrymen. Selim was sent ashore immediately after dinner, and soon reported that the boat was the *Columbia*, and the party, a Mr. Carter and friends, including a doctor somebody, all from Philadelphia. After dinner Van Beuren, Jack and Balford started for a stroll along the river bank, and in the darkness ran into some people coming from the opposite direction. The Nubian boatman and guide, carrying the lantern from the *Ammon-Ra*, had stumbled against the boatman who was guiding a similar party from the *Columbia*.

It happened as they were crossing a shadoof ditch, and both men had their lanterns broken and extinguished. While the guides were swearing vigorously at each other, the two parties became acquainted, and it not unnaturally followed that the travellers from the *Ammon-Ra* were invited to go on board the *Columbia*. Thus it came to pass that Van Beuren, Oswald and Balford became acquainted with Carter, White and Van Rennsalaer.

The morning following, Jack, Van and Ernest, Margaret, Katherine and Billie, started for Abydos. This was an eight-mile ride, and the donkeys were proverbially bad. They had examined the wonders of this but partially excavated ruin, and had taken their lunch beneath its massive roof. They had tried to picture the divine Harmachis in his agony and desolation, as he saw the great God Osiris revealed to him. They had taken numerous pictures of its interior and approaches, and were on their way back to the boat, and not more than a mile from their destination, when, while trying to race on a narrow path, Margaret's donkey fell suddenly to his knees, throwing his rider forward like a catapult. Billie checked his animal as quickly as possible and, jumping off, ran back to aid his fallen companion while his own donkey trotted off for Balianeh and supper. When Billie reached her and saw Balford with Margaret's head in his lap, while she lay there quite white and helpless, a big sob rose to his lips. In a few moments, however, she opened

her eyes and attempted to rise, but, with a little scream of pain, fell back faint. She soon became herself again and asked for her donkey. Number One, as he was called, was standing placidly by, and Balford and Billie seated her on the side saddle, first unlacing her high boot, as the ankle had already swollen and was very painful. So the procession started, Billie supporting Margaret in the saddle, and Ernest leading Number One. Billie thought that he was entirely responsible for the mishap, and both he and Balford tried in their clumsy, masculine way to comfort Margaret and distract her thoughts from herself, by calling her attention to all kinds of foolish things by the roadside. Jack, Van and Katherine, who had been left far behind, now came up and were very sympathetic. When they reached the boat, two of the crew came up the bank and carefully carried the invalid to her room. Sister Anne and Katherine examined the poor foot and found it much swollen and blackened, and, alarmed at its appearance, called a consultation in the saloon, where it was decided to send over to the *Columbia* and see if Dr. Van Rennsalaer would come and advise them. So it happened that we find the good-looking young doctor holding Margaret's ankle and speaking words of cheer to her. Billie instinctively disliked the young Medic from the first, and when he saw the deference and attention bestowed upon him by the women of the party, and the time he took in making his diagnosis, he hated him, and

took a drink of brandy and water and a cigarette to comfort himself.

"Well, Doctor, how long will it be before I can walk again?" asked Margaret, after a pause.

"It is hard to say exactly. You have a badly sprained ankle with rupture of some of the ligaments; to-morrow, when the swelling has gone down, I can tell better."

"Oh, thank you very much, Doctor, but we won't bother you to come again. All I have to do is to keep quiet, use the lotion, and not use the foot, you say."

"Yes, that's about all, but I had better see you again in the morning. I will come in directly after breakfast. We don't leave until noon."

After the doctor had left the stateroom, Margaret said to Katherine:

"Isn't he charming, so gentle and encouraging? I like him immensely."

"He seems to know what he is about, and he is very gentlemanly. You rather liked to have him bang your foot about, didn't you?"

"I didn't mind it much, but he seemed so interested, and to know just how to handle a sprained ankle. Will you get the applications ready, I mean, tell John to?"

"Yes, dear," and off she went. As she passed through the saloon, the doctor was just taking his leave after promising to call in the morning.

"Nice fellow, that," said Van.

"Yes," said Jack, "seems to know his business."

"Well," said Katherine, as she passed through, "he has made the deepest kind of impression on Margaret; do you believe in love at first sight, Billie?"

"I can't see what you see to like in that popin-jay," answered that young man. "He thinks he knows it all, and you sit around and just hang on his words. I think he is a Philadelphia cad."

"How can you use such language, William?" said Sister Anne; "the man was exceedingly polite to all of us, and we ought to be grateful."

Billie was allowed to talk to Margaret through the door, and apologised very humbly for what he considered his own particular fault.

"Oh, I shall be all right in a few days," came back to him through the panels. "The doctor is coming again in the morning."

"Darn the doctor," thought Billie; "here he can come when he pleases, go to her bedroom, feel of her ankle, look wise and all that, and I, who know her a hundred times better than he, have to stand and talk through the door. Darn the doctors, anyway," and Billie took another drink and went disconsolately to bed. On the morning following, Doctor Van Rennsalaer, as he had promised, came again, and, after being closeted with Katherine and Margaret for a half-hour, during which time Billie heard peals of laughter issuing from the sick room, he bade them good-bye, after giving out the bulletin

that the patient was doing as well as could be expected. When Billie heard the hilarity in Room No. 5, he felt that he could stand it no longer, so he jumped into the felucca, rowed fiercely for the opposite shore, and plunged into the river for a swim. He rather hoped that a crocodile or something would drag him under. He wondered, if such a thing happened, whether she would miss him.

"Bah," he said to himself, "women are no good, anyhow," and so he dressed and rowed back to the boat. The *Ammon-Ra* and *Columbia* cast off at about the same time, and they had a pretty race for a little ; but the Haswell boat was much the better, and soon distanced her competitor, much to Billie's relief, who was fervently hoping the *Columbia* would run on a sand-bar and stay there. Suddenly the wind died down and the boat began to drift back with the current, but the old reis ordered the whole crew ashore to track, and over they tumbled. A long hawser was fastened to the mast and carried ashore, where each boatman had his individual loop, which he quickly attached to the main cable, and slipping the noose over the shoulders, the whole eleven started along the tow path. It was slow work, but better than lying still or drifting back, and it gave the party a sense of oriental *dolce far niente* to loll back on the divans, while the boatmen slowly tramped along far ahead, chanting some wild song as they went. So they progressed until

evening. Toward the Lybian Desert the sun was slowly sinking like a great orange-coloured ball of fire. The scattered cloudlets had taken on the reflected glory of the setting sun and were in a dozen shades of prismatic colouring—brilliant vermillion shading into delicate pinks and deep purples, and to the greys and blacks of approaching twilight. A single star glimmered faintly now, but with ever-increasing brilliancy, through the fronds of the great palm above the dark bank. The tree, with the slow, ceaseless movement of its branches, and the stars' light coming and going, seemed like some living monster, some grotesque form from a bygone age, blinking sleepily down on the dahabeah, and sighing at the new civilisation which enabled a thing so modern to be there. A camel, with slow and supercilious mien, tramped by. His ghost-like master, like the uncouth beast, vouchsafed but a glance and passed on. Sharply silhouetted against the evening sky, they seemed strange and uncanny and as if they had stepped out of a century long gone by. Nothing has been changed among this strange people since the reign of the Rameses and the Ptolemies. The dress, habits, customs, beast and boats, are all as they were before the dawn of the Christian era. On the surface of the broad river, it is true, one sees an occasional tourist or mail steamer, and the sailing dahabeah is not quite the same as the silk-canopied, slave-manned craft, in which the love-sick queen floated down in the arms of her favourite

Antony. But even the *Ammon-Ra* was weird in her make-up. The long, pointed boom, balanced on the foremast and standing always at an angle, appeared to pierce both the heavens above and the water below. The boatmen were now furling the sail, and the Arab, way up at the point, seemed among the clouds and was scarcely discernible, while the others, ten in number, all embracing the boom and hauling in and housing the sail at short intervals along the stick, were merely small silhouettes against the darkening sky.

The stillness was solemn ; but there were sounds to break it. From the neighbouring village came occasionally the cries of children, softened by the distance, and ever and anon, the mournful braying of the ubiquitous donkey. The moon began to silver the landscape, and powder the plains with snow. A flock of honking geese crossed behind, and though the blaze from the gun, which was always kept on deck, scattered their horizontal battalions harmlessly, the phalanx was quickly reformed. And now the quiet of the scene was broken by the Arab crew, who, having finished their frugal meal of black bread and meat stewed together in a large earthen-ware vessel, squatted contentedly around, while two of their number, provided with primitive instruments, strummed out a monotonous tune, while the others chanted a song or prayer attuned to three or four notes, sounding like nothing ever heard elsewhere.

After an hour of music, the little drum notes sank away into the sighing breeze. This evening the *Ammon-Ra* tied up at Kenh, and after dinner a walk was proposed. Four of the party started out, Miss Brown and Katherine, Van Beuren and Balford. The moon was at its full. The air had lost the heat of the day and a gentle breeze made it a perfect night for a stroll along the path.

They had walked a half-mile or more, when it was proposed to turn. On the way back Balford found himself walking with Katherine, while Van was some distance ahead helping Sister Anne across the numerous shadoof ditches which intersected their path at short intervals.

"Oh, Mr. Balford, my shoe has come untied," exclaimed Katherine, as they were passing a grove of tall date palms, one of which had fallen close to the bank, "would you mind tying it?"

"Certainly not. Is that right?" answered Balford.

"Yes, thank you; let us sit here for a few moments. Isn't it heavenly?"

Ernest seated himself and they were looking out over the broad swathe of dancing, rippling silver which pointed from the full moon to them. Ernest felt the lightest touch of a warm hand on his, and then it rested there for a moment before it closed tightly on his. Balford started to rise, but Katherine raised his hand to her lips.

Balford, suddenly overcome, put his arm about her waist and drew her to him. Katherine's head

sank on his shoulder, and he kissed her mouth, her cheek, her hair and whispered words of passionate tenderness.

Then, with a groan, he sprang to his feet and, clenching his hands till the nails marked the flesh, he said in quivering voice :

"Mrs. Oswald, are you ready to return to the boat? I shall have some letters from Keneh in the morning, which will call me back to America, and I shall take the postal boat to Cairo."

Katherine did not reply. She followed along the path in silence and soon they were again opposite the *Ammon-Ra*. One of the Nubian boatmen came up the bank with a lantern to meet them, and they went on board. Van stood at the head of the stairs and called out :

"Well, where have you two been? We were beginning to get anxious, and were about to send out search parties for you."

"Yes, indeed," called Margaret, who had been carried up for the first time, and lay on one of the divans, "we thought you had met with some such adventure as Arthur Livingston and Belle Hamlyn."

"No," answered Katherine quickly, "Mr. Balford lost his way for a few moments, but then we got back into the narrow path."

"Selim tells me we shall get our mail by the post boat early in the morning. Won't that be fine?" said Margaret to Katherine.

"Yes, indeed; I hope we shall all have good news."

They were on deck; Haswell and Jack were engrossed in a game of backgammon, while Billie was trying to strum out some music on the guitar, but in reality furtively watching Margaret, who was in the highest spirits over her emancipation from the stuffy cabin. Sister Anne was working over her embroidery, and though Balford insisted that he must go below and write some letters, they all insisted so strongly that he should not, he finally stayed. Then the lights were put out and the hangings raised, and in the bright, still moonlight, the party sang some of the dear old home songs. But two of the party were far from happy. Balford was thoroughly out of spirits. A burning sense of shame and disloyalty was upon him. He could see no honourable course for him but to leave the party. It would be a bitter disappointment, most bitter, but he could not stay. He did not know whether his friend's wife loved him or not. He did not care, but he felt himself but human, and he loved Jack. He would go, give up the pleasant companionship of his oldest friends, give up the wonders of the upper Nile, of which he had dreamed as a boy, but had never expected to see. He would doubtless receive some mail in the morning, and could make the proper and plausible excuses.

As for Katherine, her feelings were a mixture of shame, wounded pride and anger. She it was who

had made the advances, and they had been repulsed. Ever since that night on the *Ailsa*, she had believed the opportunity would come when she might bring Balford to her feet. And to-night she had almost won him. It was heartless coquetry in the beginning, but, in her great desire to humble him, she had unconsciously fallen into her own trap. She had come nearer loving Balford than ever she had come to loving any man. And *he*, now that he knew her secret and felt his power over her, had said that he would leave her. No, he must not do that! She must have a word with him, even if she were forced to the point of asking forgiveness—forgiveness for what? How her nature recoiled from this.

"When shall we reach Luxor, Charlie?" asked Jack of Haswell.

"Day after to-morrow, with favourable winds, Selim tells me."

"I have read so much about Luxor, Karnak and Thebes, that it doesn't seem as though we would ever really get there."

"I hope you have crammed up about Rameses and Queen Hatasoo. Selim is an Egyptologist of no mean acquirements, and will, if wanted, explain every stone in the place."

"I shall be content on this trip with a mere smattering of knowledge. I want to read it all up afterwards, and then come again some time," answered Jack.

On the following morning, toward daybreak, the

postal boat from Cairo overtook them. Ernest had not slept well, and when he heard the hurrying to and fro on deck and the whistle of the steamer, he arose and hurriedly dressed, and was on deck just as Selim returned in the felucca with the little white-sealed mail bag marked *Ammon-Ra*, containing a generous mail. Balford sat about, had a cup of coffee and a smoke, and waited for the others to appear. Nervous and excited as he was, yet he had determined upon leaving the party, and, before the others had appeared, had asked Selim about the mail boats going down the river. Selim told him that the post boat down would pass them about two o'clock in the afternoon.

At breakfast, after the entire party were together, Ernest told of having received a letter from his lawyer, the contents of which meant a great deal to him, and, he added, his lawyer thought he should come back at once, to try to save a few dollars from the wreck of a concern in which he had large interests. They were all astounded and refused to listen to his going; but he fabricated so plausible a necessity, that argument was out of the question, and at last it was arranged that he should be transferred with his luggage to the postal boat, which was due to pass them some time during the afternoon.

"Can't you manage to get back to us, Ernest," said Haswell, "in time to cruise for awhile in the Mediterranean?"

"I don't know, old man ; you see, I am quite in the dark myself in this matter."

"How unfortunate it is, Mr. Balford ; it will spoil the rest of our trip," cried Margaret impulsively.

"You are very kind to say so, but I should be sorry to feel that such is the case. You must all take copious notes and pictures, and when you come back I can enjoy it all by proxy, as it were."

While Balford was speaking, Katherine sat silent. Two bright red spots were on her cheeks, and now and then she raised her eyes to look across at him. No one but Jack, at the time, noticed that she took no part in urging Ernest to stay. She was very unhappy, but it is a question whether regret or chagrin was the emotion uppermost in her mind.

A kind of pall fell over the party that morning. They were, without exception, genuinely sorry to lose their friend, and it seemed as though this might be a bad augury. Balford was so suave and courteous always, and so handsome withal, that the gap left in the little household would be keenly felt. When at last, toward the end of luncheon, the shrill whistle of the little stern-wheel postal boat was heard, it was with almost a feeling of relief that the party gathered about Balford for farewells.

She had been signalled by the *Ammon-Ra* and soon had made a long sweep and turned her nose up stream.

"God bless you, old fellow ; lots of kind messages to every one at home."

"Good-bye. I hope you will all have a delightful time and come back safely," and with many wavings of handkerchiefs and a few moist eyes, Balford faded away in the distance, bound for he knew not where, and but little dreaming that he should never again see one face of the merry party waving to him from the deck.

They had delayed so long at and near Kenesh that late in the afternoon they made out the *Columbia* far astern. She seemed to be bringing wind to them, for both her sails were set and drawing well, while the *Ammon-Ra* was only just stemming the tide.

"Oh, give me the glasses," cried Margaret. "Yes, that must be the dear *Columbia*. I can see the flag; I wonder if they will catch up with us."

"Oh, yes, my lady, we will tie up together to-night," said Selim, who had come up to call attention to the boat.

"Dr. Van Rennsalaer will be pleased with the way my foot is doing. See, Billie, I can rest my whole weight on it without the crutch at all."

"Yes, and it would have been just as well if the Philadelphian hadn't touched it."

"No, those hot applications he advised and the massage he gave it, did it lots of good, I'm sure," answered Margaret mischievously.

"That's a matter of opinion," said Billie.

"Well, it's my foot, and I know he helped it."

"Yes, and that's your hand, and that doctor will have that, too, if you don't look out."

"I fancy I am able to take care of myself, Mr. Brown."

They had tied up and were waiting for dinner-time when the *Columbia* hove in sight around the point, and was soon fast against the bank about fifty yards behind the *Ammon-Ra*. She had scarcely stopped when Carter and Van Rennsalaer jumped ashore and came over to call. Margaret had anticipated the visit, and as an interesting invalid lay on the sofa on deck. She looked very fetching in her light blue tea gown, held in at the waist by a broad belt of silver coins. An Italian rug was thrown lightly over her feet, and her blonde, fluffy hair, which would not keep confined, and her pink and white face were set in a very pretty picture.

"How do you do, Miss Jones? How are you, Mr. Haswell and Miss Brown? How is my patient doing?"

"Splendidly, thank you; I can almost walk on the foot."

"We were just sending Selim over with an invitation to all of you to dine with us," said Haswell.

"You are very kind, but it would be like the plague of locusts if we all came," said Mr. Carter, "and besides, poor White is laid up with a kind of intermittent fever."

"Oh, I am sorry; nothing serious, I hope."

"No; he went out to shoot pigeons the other

day and stood in the fields for two hours under the broiling sun. That evening he had a high fever and it has clung to him ever since, but he is better to-day," answered Dr. Van Rennsalaer.

"Well, will you two come, then?" asked Margaret.

"Certainly, delighted."

"Mr. Van Beuren and Mr. Balford are well, I hope."

"Why, you know, poor Balford has been called suddenly home—left this afternoon by the postal boat for Cairo."

"You don't mean it! How you must miss him."

"Yes, we shall. Mr. Van Beuren and the Oswalds are with us, of course. Oh, Jack! Van! here are some old friends. Come up," called Haswell, through the half-opened ventilator over the saloon.

"Will you take a peg, gentlemen? The ladies have had their tea. John, bring some whiskey-soda. John always understands this, you know, but if I said to him, 'Bring some whiskey *and* soda,' the Lord knows what would appear."

After taking their refreshments the visitors returned to their own boat to dress.

"It will be nice to have them to-night," said Jack, "we shall miss poor old Ernest so much."

At seven o'clock they sat down to dinner. John and Ali served the meal, while Selim kept a general superintendence and opened the wine.

"Have you killed a sheep yet?" asked Haswell of Mr. Carter.

"Why, no ; what do you mean?"

"The old custom, which has prevailed for many, many years, has been to kill a sheep for the crew at certain stages of the journey up and down the river. You will hear of it at Luxor ; they all expect it. It need not necessarily be a sheep, but you give so much money, and the crew buy a sheep or a calf and slaughter it, and it is eaten for days, even the bones themselves being utilized."

"It seems to me that Mahmoud said something about this the other day, but I didn't understand him, nor pay any particular attention to it ; don't you remember, Van Rennsalaer?"

"No ; I have heard nothing about it, but I can imagine the poor fellows would need something besides that rock-like black bread they stew up three times a day. How many have you, Mr. Haswell, in your crew?"

"Seventeen all told—eleven before the mast, as it were, and the other six are the pilot or reis, the steersman, four connected with the kitchen, dining-room and laundry, then our dragoman, Selim."

"Our boat is smaller, I think. We have only twelve, but even so there are plenty of mouths to feed."

"How deliciously you cook your quail. I can't get our people to do it right. They cook them to death."

"That's the great trouble," said Margaret ; "we only discovered the other day that they are dark

meated and should be treated accordingly ; this is the result."

"Have you tried shooting them yet?" asked Jack.

"No, we are not very ardent sportsmen. White has a gun with him, but further than a few ducks and pigeons, we have had no game of our own getting. Have you tried them at all?"

"Yes, Van Beuren and I have been out a few times. It is so different from our methods of hunting them at home that it is rather interesting. You have a line of about twenty beaters and they flush the birds by walking them up. They are little chaps and not hard to hit, but excellent eating, as you see."

"It's fun to try anything new," remarked Billie.

"That is a blasé remark from one so young," said Margaret with a twinkle in her eyes.

"From the look of your deck there must be musical talent on board," remarked the Doctor.

"No talent, Doctor, but we all do chorus parts. Mr. Brown also tells us in song about the Bowery and other swell places in New York," answered Katherine.

"Yes, I am sorry to say, my brother's taste in song is not as elevated as it might be," added Sister Anne.

Billie had said almost nothing during the meal. He had thought of drowning his sorrows in drink, when he first heard that the Doctor was to come

to dinner, but, when assured by Margaret that this was the only way they could pay him for his professional visits, he was somewhat mollified, so after the meal was finished and they had all adjourned to the deck, they had some jolly songs to both guitar and piano, and Billie sang some of his specialties in a very creditable manner. When the moon began to tip the distant hills, all was quiet on the *Ammon-Ra* save the rhythmical breathing of the brown-wrapped mummies on the lower deck and the sighing of the breeze as it swished through the rigging.

CHAPTER XII.

TOWARD evening on the following day they came in sight of Luxor and Karnak. As they neared the town, they were delighted to see their country's flag floating from the top of a square white building standing high over the river bank, and, as they came opposite, two guns rang out on the evening air.

"What is that, Selim?"

"They are saluting your boat, sir. That is the American Consul's house."

"Do you remember his name?"

"No, sir. He is an Egyptian appointed by the American Consul at Cairo. You will see quite a little of him while you are in Luxor, I think."

"Well, we'll give him two guns, anyway," and Van Beuren slipped in a couple of cartridges and fired into the air.

As they approached the bank beneath the town, for there are no landing places on the Nile, they observed a number of dahabeahs, and all along, in groups of from five to fifteen, squatted the different varieties of natives. Donkey boys, in blue gowns, with their patient animals back of them, whose noses were checked back to touch their throats, in the effort to make them look attractive, Shikaris,

ready to tempt the lover of shooting into the sugar-cane for jackals, or the lentil fields for quail, sellers of turkeys and fowl, their birds tied foot to foot, or allowed to wander about under guard, then the curio seller in various manifestations, all in blue or black gowns with snowy turban or white capote.

The *Ammon-Ra* found a berth well up above the town, and beyond the other boats. Every one stops at Luxor for a week at least on the way up and about the same time on the way down the river. As they drifted into their position, they noticed the handsome dahabeah *Kinet-et-Nil*, two boats below them.

"Oh, Mr. Haswell, isn't that the boat belonging to the young Englishmen you introduced to us in Cairo?" asked Margaret.

"Annersley and Villiers, you mean? Yes, that is, they were guests, as I understood it, of Sir Something or other."

"When the *Columbia* comes we shall know quite a number of people, won't we?" said Katherine.

"As I remember it, Luxor was always the place of greatest gaiety on the river, probably because every one stops here long enough to get acquainted, and there are enough Europeans to get up balls and races and so on. Then, too, they always illuminate the boats at this place, have fireworks and all that, you know," said Haswell.

"How jolly it must be," said Sister Anne. "I wonder if they have churches here."

"Yes, indeed, they do, an English church, a Roman Catholic one, a hospital and all."

"I am so anxious to see Thebes and the tombs of the Kings," said Sister Anne; "they must be the grandest relics on earth."

"Let me see," said Jack; "there is Karnak to see—funny, I never heard of Karnak until I came to Egypt—and Luxor on this side, with Thebes, and all its temples and the tombs of the Kings, on the other. Isn't that all, Charles?"

"Yes, I think so. It's ten years since my last visit."

After dinner, Haswell and Van Beuren strolled up to the Luxor Hotel and Gardens. The air was heavy with the fragrance of the yellow acacia trees, and the moon shone down through the feathery fronds of the mimosa with a dimmed radiance.

"By Jove, Van, isn't she a beauty?" exclaimed Haswell, as two ladies, walking slowly, passed them.

"She is a stunner, but a kind of ethereal beauty; who does she remind me of?"

"The Lord knows; but she has a most attractive face—Why, hello! Villiers, how are you?"

"How are you, Haswell, and Mr. — beg pardon, but I have forgotten your name?"

"Van Beuren."

"Ah, yes, thank you. It was a slight acquaintance, you know—only met you once, I believe. When did you come?"

"Just arrived and were taking a stroll up to the hotel," answered Van. "Won't you join us?"

"Sorry, old chap, but we are with the ladies."

"Oh, all right, but tell me, who is that stunning young woman with the older one?"

"Oh, that's Lady Wiltshire's companion; odd thing about her, quite a history, can't stop now—come and see us, we shall be here two or three days longer."

So they parted, and Haswell and Van went into the quaint, rambling hotel, looked at the list of guests, and started back again for the *Ammon-Ra*.

"By Jove, old man, that face bothers me. Who in the devil does she resemble so much? It makes me feel creepy. I have certainly seen her before."

So they strolled leisurely down and joined the others. They told of meeting Annersley and Villiers, but nothing was said of the young woman.

Selim had engaged donkeys for the following day, when the whole party were to start for Karnak, that marvellous ruin, the most stupendous in the world! They spent three or four hours there. They needed no local guide. Selim was a guide-book in himself. When they returned to the boat for luncheon, Van looked up a number of data in his Baedeker and Rawlinson, in order to substantiate or disprove some of Selim's statements, but he found the dragoman exact in everything, dates, hieroglyphics and all, and from then on they took his word without question.

In the afternoon they went to the temple of Luxor, close to the water and still half buried in the ruins of the old Roman dwellings, which cover and partially protect a hundred temples in Egypt.

Just before dinner, the young English curate called, in company with Mr. Slocum, the engineer of the railroad which was slowly extending its lines toward Luxor and Assouan. They brought invitations, in the shape of tickets, for the ball at the hotel, and for the native races near the village, three days later. The money obtained in this way was to be devoted, so the curate informed them, to the uses of the recently established hospital. They took a number of tickets and promised to be present, at least at the races, which were to be of a unique character, camel races, buffalo races, donkey races and bishareen hurdle races.

"What a social centre Luxor seems to be," said Katherine at dinner; "balls and races and all that."

"Well, you see, with this comfortable hotel a good many invalids come and spend the whole winter here. The climate is much more salubrious than that of Cairo," answered Haswell.

The day following, the party started for Thebes. They left the dahabeah at nine o'clock and crossed to the opposite side in their own boat. The donkeys, with Ali and their lunch, went in separate boats. Arrived on the other side, they found the water so shoal that the boatmen had to carry them ashore. Miss Brown refused, at first, to be a party

to so undignified a procedure, but finding that it was the only means of landing, she was forced to yield and was grabbed up by two brawny Nubians and carried to the sand bar, amidst peals of laughter from her comrades and frantic cries from herself. Her fear of falling into the water caused her to embrace her sable carriers hysterically, one of whom had a severe fit of coughing after landing his charge, as the result of her efforts at self-preservation.

Everything was soon forgotten, however, as they galloped along over the sands and up to the higher ground, where suddenly the wonderful Colossi of Memnon came into view. How quiet and dignified they looked sitting bolt upright, with their palms flat on their knees! The party verged off to the right and visited the great Ramesium.

At one o'clock they found themselves in the holy of holies in the Medinet Abou, that great temple and residence of the greatest of the Rameses. Ali had spread two large rugs, and had arranged seats for the whole party with stones fallen from the temple wall. It seemed so strange to them to be lunching *à l'Américain* beneath the hieroglyphs and bas reliefs carved in the stone five thousand years ago! To stop and think, how it must have looked in those distant years, was to conjure up fairy-land, but, as Haswell observed, it was better to see it to-day, for they, of five thousand years ago, were a cruel, inhuman lot. There were but two classes, the King with his satellites, and the people who

were slaves, and these two were separated by an immeasurable gulf.

After luncheon, they wandered about the ruins, and finally decided to return to the boat. Margaret was not with them to-day, but she expected to go on all their future expeditions.

Billie had offered to stop on the boat with her for company, but she had declined his offer, saying that she would not have him miss seeing the temples for anything.

The party had not been gone long, however, before a caller was announced, and Dr. Van Rennsalaer appeared.

"Why, Miss Jones, how do you do? I rather expected to find you out with the rest."

"And is that why you called?" asked Margaret saucily.

"No, I am a wicked prevaricator, but I'll tell the truth now. I watched your boats going off, and, not seeing you with the rest, I concluded that you had remained behind, and so I came over."

"Well, that's better; but why are you not sight-seeing to-day yourself?"

"I don't know, unless it was that I preferred coming to see you."

"Why, you *are* making up for your first remark, and with compound interest. Where did your party go, and how is your patient, Mr. White?"

"Every one on the boat, including White, went to Karnak to-day."

"Have you seen Egypt before, Dr. Van Rennsalaer?"

"No, and I am immensely interested."

"Well, why under the sun didn't you go to see ruins to-day, instead of coming to a little wreck like me?"

"Why, I don't know. I wanted to see how your foot was coming on."

"Are you always so conscientious about your patients, Doctor?"

"No, that is, yes, but your injury was so peculiar, that I became deeply interested, you know."

"Oh, look, there comes another dahabeah; what a lot of them there are here now."

Doctor Van, as they had begun to call him, was already deeply in love with his little patient, and the slightest encouragement at this time would have precipitated matters at once. With a woman's perception Margaret had seen this, but, knowing that it would probably be but a fleeting feeling on his part, and feeling sure she had no response to it, sought to spare the young man any humiliation. Therefore she skilfully changed the conversation and summoned John with cool drinks and refreshments. The interlude brought the young man back to mundane things, and shortly afterward he took his leave. Shortly after three o'clock Margaret heard the boatmen singing as they rowed, and, looking over the side, of the *Ammon-Ra*, she saw the party returning.

"Well, you missed it this time, Margaret," called Billie, as they came up to the side.

"Oh, I have had a very nice time myself, and not alone either," answered Margaret.

"Why, have you had visitors?" asked Van Beuren.

"Yes, or no rather, not visitors, but a visitor and a very nice fellow, too."

"Van Rennsalaer, I'll bet," said Billie to himself.

"Who was your caller, the curate?" asked Katherine.

"No, the cure aches," quickly answered the young lady.

"Well done, Margaret! I see it! Van Rennsalaer! But look here, was it a tryst? This is getting serious. You don't want to go to Philadelphia to live, do you?" said Haswell.

"I don't know; New York is rather gay for me."

"And a doctor's wife, too!"

"What was the matter with him; why didn't he go to explore ruins to-day?"

"I don't know, I am sure, but he spent most of the morning here, that I can vouch for."

All the rest of the party went to their rooms to get the dust from their faces and clothes but Billie lingered behind.

"Margaret, do you like Van Rennsalaer?" he asked in an anxious tone.

"Why, yes, I like him very much, don't you?"

"No, I don't; I don't know why, but I can't stand

him. You don't like him *very* much, do you?" and Billie sat down in a chair near Margaret's head.

"Well, that depends on what you call very much," replied Margaret, blushing in spite of herself.

"Well, I mean—you—you—don't *love* him."

"Why, you foolish child, no, of course not; I have only known him a little while."

"Oh!"

"You must know lots about a man before you love him."

"Margaret, I hate to bother you, but I am—I feel that I must have a serious talk with you—for I like you very much—Don't you see? I have fallen in love with you, dear, and, if it sends me home to-morrow, I must tell you now, for I am so unhappy. Just tell me to shut up, you know, and I will understand. I am half crazy, anyhow, but I am fearfully in love, and—what!"

Margaret had flushed to her hair at the very first words and was sure that she wanted to cry. She reached out her hand and took Billie's in hers, and then she buried her head in the pillow and began to cry in earnest. Billie was frightened. He had never seen a woman cry before. He leaned forward and kissed her lightly on the temple, and then fled precipitately, not knowing whether he had been accepted or rejected. Margaret recovered herself in a few moments, and, in turn, wondered whether she was engaged or not. She rather thought she was. She had grown to be very fond of the merry, care-

less, pugnacious boy. He was far from the ideal she had pictured to her girlish fancy a few years before, but she had long ago come to the conclusion that the perfect man existed only in the story books, and that Billie was one with as few faults as the average, and was good enough for her, anyhow. Their ages were nearly the same. Neither had been seriously in love before and she felt that she loved him dearly.

They did not meet again until dinner, each striving hard to hide their embarrassment, and feeling that, at the first opportunity, the subject would be brought up again and settled. At the meal there was none of the usual chaffing between them, an occurrence so unusual that Jack observed:

"I think this is the first meal that we have sat down to since we started in which you and Billie haven't had at least one or two quarrels, Margaret. For my part, I miss it; it is like serving lettuce with no dressing. Are you pining for dear old Balford, or thinking of the good-looking Medico?"

"I don't know, but I may be both, longing for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still sailing toward Cairo."

"The hand, then, referring to the Doctor's massage, *nest ce pas?*" laughed Jack.

"As for you, Sweet William, you looked just now as though cruel Fate had taken away your last friend," said Van.

"Well, I wish you would change the subject, it's too personal," said Billie testily.

"Why, William, that does not sound like you; you are generally quite amiable," said Sister Anne.

"To-morrow's Sunday, who's going to church?" said Haswell, wishing to relieve the evident embarrassment of Billie; "and remember that in this country no one can say, 'Yes, if it don't storm.'"

"I shall go," said Katherine. "When does church begin?"

"Ten-thirty; suppose we have breakfast at nine."

"All right."

On the following morning Katherine and Jack started for the Gardens of the Luxor Hotel, in which the little English church is located. The relations between these two, while decidedly strained, were still friendly enough in the presence of others. Jack suspected the cause of Balford's sudden departure, but, knowing nothing with any certainty, he said nothing, nor would he in any event, for he had long since come to the conclusion that his wife did not love him, and he suffered in silence, and rarely entered into the conversation or the jollity of the others. His unhappiness was eating his life away.

They walked up the avenue of acacias toward the hotel. It was a lovely tropical day. The air was laden with the heavy perfume of the yellow flowers, and the birds on every side were sounding out their notes, in very gladness to be alive. The

cry of the pretty crested hoopoe, the dreamy note of the wood pigeon and the hoarser cawing of the crows all formed a sleepy monotone. They crossed by the corner of the hotel to the extensive gardens in the rear. The superb Bougainvillea, climbing to the very tops of the palms, hung down in graceful festoons, covered with gorgeous flowers, and forming many a bower for the rustic seats beneath them. Roses were there in profusion, the great American Beauty, the Gloire de Paris, and about and above them the gentle rustle of the waving palm fronds, spoke of rest and peace.

As they turned into the main path leading to the chapel, the little bell was tolling out the summons to prayer. A lady dressed in black was sitting, half screened by the foliage, on one side of the path. She seemed to be reading, and, as they came quite close, she lifted her face from her book.

"Merciful God! Clare!" was the smothered ejaculation from Oswald, as he staggered and stopped.

His wife turned to see what had caused him to halt. His face frightened her. It was colourless, and his eyes were staring and fixed. He groped for support.

"Oswald! Jack, what is the matter?" and she followed his fixed eyeballs to the beautiful face looking up at them in mild surprise.

"Nothing—that is—my heart—something troubles

me," and he would have fallen but for the support of a strong arm from behind.

"Excuse me, Madame, is your husband ill?" came a hearty voice. "Allow me to help you to the hotel," and Jack permitted himself to be led away—with occasional frightened glances backward and an effort to clear his eyes. He entered the house and the kindly Englishman insisted on his taking a little brandy and water.

He had soon pulled himself together, but desired to be left alone. So they placed him on a sofa, and all left him. Katherine went over to the little church for a few moments. As soon as they had left him, Jack sprang to his feet and began to pace the small room.

"Clare! alive and here! My God! Can it be? Can I be wrong? It *is* Clare. She does not know me or else she has heard of this marriage and scorns me. I must see her. I must tell her of all this horrid mistake. How can it be Clare? She was drowned on that fearful night! They saw the boat capsize. Oh, God be merciful," and with a groan of unutterable anguish he sank to the sofa, only to rise from it again, as he gasped :

"Clare's eyes, her mouth, it must be she; I, her husband, should know; I will go and ask her, I will tell her," and as he staggered, half crazed, toward the door, it opened and the kindly Englishman stood there, rotund and rubicund, with the lady in black at his side. With a bound Jack was at her

side, his hand upon hers, as he plead with her in heart-rending tones.

"Clare, my darling, my wife, speak to me, speak to Jack, your husband, who loves you."

"Here, here, young man, calm yourself; what does all this mean?" and the bluff Englishman, with serious face, took Jack firmly by the shoulders and forced him back.

"Miss Grant, do you know this man?"

"No, Sir John, I have never seen him before."

Jack started back at the voice—her voice, too. He gazed at her for a moment in dumb surprise, then, as the door closed upon them, he gave himself up to hopeless despair.

A few moments later, Katherine came to him, and, after asking if he felt better, they left the house and walked back toward the *Ammon-Ra*.

Jack was dazed, stupefied. He wondered if he could be in his right mind. Could this be an hallucination? No, he was there, walking with Katherine down the acacia-lined alley. He felt the hard ground under his feet. He heard the birds. It *was* himself. There could be no doubt on that point. Who was she, then? Clare—Clare, his heart told him—Yet she denied him and she was called Miss Grant.

Katherine spoke not a word. She knew that some unexpected meeting had taken place, but she had noticed in an instant that the recognition was on one side only. The woman had simply a puz-

zled, surprised look, but Jack's face she could never forget. She would say nothing, she decided, but would wait for some explanation from him.

Jack went directly to his room. He had determined on one thing. He would go to the hotel as soon as he could. He would look up this Englishman and find out about Miss Grant. He *must* do so. He could not rest, and if by some miracle it should be Clare!—"Oh, God, give me strength," he prayed.

On the following morning, after a sleepless night, he made an excuse of illness and allowed the others to make a second visit to Thebes. As soon as they were gone, he started for the hotel. As he passed up and along the bank, he noticed that one of the dahabeahs had left, and in a moment he knew that *she* was gone. The *Kinet-el-Nil* was no longer in her previous position. Anxious beyond words, he asked a passing dragoman what had become of the boat.

"She has gone up the river in this morning early to Assouan."

"Thank God," he murmured.

He felt the greatest relief at this, as now he could see her again. He determined to proceed to the hotel and find the curate, or some one, who could tell him something of the party. He *must* talk to some one who knew the Wiltshires and find out the history of Miss Grant.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONDAY night had been selected for the illumination of the *Ammon-Ra*. All the morning the boatmen were busy carrying great bundles of fresh sugar-cane and palm fronds on board, and had tied them gracefully along the sides and deck of the boat.

Osier crates, filled with many coloured lanterns, were brought up from the space under the deck, and these were strung along the sides, in three rows, and up the mast and great, pointed boom. The colours alternated red, white and blue, and, at the extreme point of the boom, was a deftly made cluster, looking, when lit, like pendulous drops of light.

When the party returned from Thebes that afternoon, everything was ready for the evening's display, and the boat looked like a floating bower.

Selim had arranged to have her pulled out and up the river for a half mile or more, and then to float back with the tide past the town. This was done while they were at dinner, and immediately afterward they all stepped into the large felucca and were rowed off some fifty yards, and then floated down with the boat.

"Isn't it like a dream of fairy land?" exclaimed

Margaret ; "the water is like a mirror, and see, there is the moon just coming up over the hills."

"It is the most beautiful sight I have ever witnessed," said Sister Anne enthusiastically.

Just then the crew began to chant a weird Nubian boat song, which added to the fascination of the scene. None of them felt like conversation. Billie and Margaret sat beside each other, and, as the boat glided silently down the stream, Billie slipped Margaret's hand into his own, and she left it there. It gave her a little sense of protection, a feeling that she was not so far from home after all.

"Look," said Haswell in a subdued voice, and in the direction he pointed they could see the sombre and majestic columns of the Luxor temple on the river's bank. Grim and silent sentinels of the ages, they stood, as they have stood, for thousands of years. It was an awe-inspiring sight. Soon rockets and Roman candles began to be set off from the *Ammon-Ra*. As this had been agreed upon as the signal for them to return, they were rowed back. As the great boat came nearer to shore, she passed the other dahabeahs against the bank, and Mr. Carter called out to them from the *Columbia* :

"That was the most weird, and, at the same time, beautiful display I have ever seen."

"Indeed it was," added the Doctor ; "we looked for Cleopatra under the palm canopy."

"Won't you all come over and have a little refreshment?" asked Carter.

"Thanks, perhaps some of us will walk down."

Soon they reached their position again, and four of them, guided by one of the boatmen, with a large lantern, walked down the path. They were welcomed by the party of the *Columbia* and repaired to the upper deck.

"Couldn't your husband come down, Mrs. Oswald?"

"No, he has not been feeling well lately, and does not go out at night."

"Have you made many acquaintances coming up the river?"

"No, very few; I think that you of the *Columbia* and two Englishmen on the *Kinet-el-Nil* are the only ones."

"Oh, did you meet that party?"

"Only the two men; they are old friends of Mr. Haswell, and he introduced them in Cairo."

"The Doctor and I are much interested in that party. You know they lay right behind us, and just as we were about to see something of them, they pulled up stakes and left."

"What a pity," said Margaret. "Was it the beautiful companion who excited your curiosity?"

"Yes, Miss Jones, it was. Will, here, saw her once, and has been trying in every way to get acquainted, and only yesterday he had a chance and met the men."

"How was that?"

"We were over at Karnak, and so was this Wilt-

shire party. It was late in the afternoon and they had no guide or dragoman. As it was Sunday, I suppose they had just gone out for a walk, but, at any rate, they got lost and had to enquire of us how to get back. In this way we became acquainted with the men, who were walking, and when later we parted at the gate of the Luxor hotel, they asked us to call on them. Then when we woke this morning, presto, the ship had passed in the night, and Mr. Carter is broken hearted."

"And you didn't meet the ladies?" asked Billie.

"No, we got nothing but a 'Good-evening,' as they passed."

"Well, now that you have gone so far, tell the rest," said Carter.

"There is not much left to tell, except that, later in the evening, we met the men at the hotel and had a drink with them, and discovered that the beautiful companion is an American, with a charming voice, and with some dark mysterious history. Of course, this wove a veil of romance about the lady, and has increased Mr. Carter's interest ten-fold."

"How exciting," said Katherine.

"We shall all be anxious to meet them up the river," said Haswell; "what you have said interests me also, for I passed this same lady in the Luxor Gardens one evening, and I have been perplexed ever since in trying to think where I have seen her before. Strong resemblances are common

enough, but in this case, I have a feeling that I have met her or been in the same place with her for some time."

"Are you going to the races to-morrow?" asked Billie.

"Yes, if White is well enough; he has had another set back, and has some fever again."

Billie had been very generous to-night. He had yielded Margaret to the doctor at once, and the latter had taken her aft to see how they kept their live stock. They had been absent for ten minutes or more, when a commotion was heard, then groans, and presumably Arabic imprecations, followed by peals of merry laughter, and Margaret and the doctor re-appeared.

"Oh, dear, you should have been there, the poor old fellow! He will have indigestion for a month. I believe you were trying to make business for yourself, Doctor."

"What's it all about?" asked Carter.

"Why, the doctor wanted to show me your turkeys and things, and as we came down from that tank, or whatever it is, the doctor stepped or jumped to help me, but what he took for a sack of potatoes or a bench, was the poor old pilot asleep. The doctor thought the deck was moving off, or some old Egyptian God was after him, I think, and in the midst of the confusion, poor Mr. White put his head out of the window just below and wanted to know what, in the name of Rameses, the row

was about. I think those were his words, were they not, Doctor?" and Margaret and the whole party went off again into peals of laughter.

"I didn't see anything so hilariously funny about it," said Dr. Van Rennsalaer; "the old fellow got hold of my leg and I thought he would draw his knife. You can't tell what these people will do when aroused."

"Yes, he certainly was aroused," said Haswell; "he was probably dreaming of home and the little ones at the time."

"Yes, of how they would climb up to get the first kiss, as papa entered the door, and then came the rude awakening. I wonder where his nearest family resides," said Billie.

"William, I am shocked," said Haswell.

"Well, it's a fact; Selim told me that these boatmen have families all along the river, respectable, well-behaved families."

"The old fellow thought the whole outfit was descending upon him, avalanche style," said Carter.

As they walked back toward the *Ammon-Ra*, they heard strains of music proceeding from their own deck.

"What in the dickens is going on?" asked Billie.

"Holy smoke! look at the dancing girls, the Gewase dance, as I am breathing, and—what! Sister Anne aiding and abetting."

Sure enough, they could see from the bank two

dusky dancers, all bedecked with spangles and tinsel and doing their best in gyrations and poses, to the music of two native performers. In front of them, as spectators, sat Miss Brown, Jack and Van, with Selim as master of ceremonies. Sister Anne was evidently ill at ease, and, immediately the others reached the deck, she exclaimed :

"Oh, Margaret, Selim has got these women to do their religious dances. Isn't it interesting?"

There was a quick interchange of glances between the men, and Billie was seized with a bad coughing fit. They all sat down to look on. The women redoubled their contortions, and after a few moments Sister Anne went below, in order that she might, while her impressions were still fresh, write a full account of the novel sight to the Rev. Mr. Everett, to be incorporated perhaps into his new book, "The Various Forms of Religion as I Have Seen Them."

"Is that really a religious dance?" asked Margaret of Katherine, when they, too, had gone down to the cabin.

"My dear, it is, as I understand it, the dance that every one sees up the Nile, but in our country and everywhere, except in the Orient, it is considered quite immoral," answered Katherine.

"Oh, how frightful."

"It seems most vulgar to us, but it is one of the things to see, and almost everybody does see it once."

"Do you suppose that Sister Anne will really write to Mr. Everett about it?"

"Very likely, but it will never be quoted in his book."

The afternoon following they all took donkeys and started for the races. These were to be held on the large plain a mile east of the town. On their way they passed many natives, leading camels or driving buffalo ahead of them. Few horses were seen. Arrived at the grounds they found their seats on the primitive grand stand. Crowds of Arabs, Bishareens from the Soudan, Nubian boatmen, and nondescript Greeks, with a sprinkling of Europeans, surrounded the lower end of the course. The races consisted of flat races for donkeys, ridden by natives, the same with camels and buffalo, wrestling on donkey back by boys, Bishareen hurdle and sack races, and so on.

Billie had brought his camera and stood out in front to catch some pictures. The clerks of the course were the Curate and the Engineer of the railroad. It was interesting to watch the natives of high and low degree making their books, and the little boys laying hard-earned perquisites on their favourites.

"Truly the spirit of gambling is inherent in the human race," remarked Haswell to Miss Brown.

"Yes," said Jack, "it is fair to suppose that the serpent, in the Garden of Eden, had a bet on the result of his little apple trick."

"I have such a horror of gambling, though," answered Sister Anne.

"Well, it's hard to say where gambling begins, Miss Brown. For instance, I heard you, not long since, making a bet of six pairs of gloves that you were right in a quotation. Now that was equivalent to betting six dollars against six that your opinion was the right one. Apply the same bet to a donkey race, and you might call it gambling. It seems to be merely a matter of degree," said Van Beuren.

"No, gambling is when one bets on cards or horse racing," answered Sister Anne.

"How about the football game, or the yacht race?" asked Billie.

"Don't let us discuss the subject further," said his sister; "go and take some more pictures."

"They're off," cried some one, and way up the course they could see a cloud of dust, and soon six unwieldy-looking objects lumbered down towards them. It was the camel race, and the long undulating gallop of the beasts, with their turbaned and excited riders, belabouring the creatures mercilessly as they came on, was a novel and interesting sight.

Three of the contestants seemed to be neck and neck, when suddenly, one camel becoming fractious, veered off sharply toward the stand. There was a cry of caution and considerable confusion, as the women tried to escape. The crea-

ture ran obliquely from his course and struck one of the uprights of the stand. Luckily, in falling, the angry beast tripped and fell sidewise, but was immediately seized and held by a number of Arabs, not, however, before he had inflicted an ugly bite on the shoulder of one of them, and had knocked the breath out of another with his broad, flat feet.

This incident, though devoid of serious results, made the ladies nervous, and they decided to witness the next two races, which were scheduled as the Bishareen hurdle and flat races, and then return to the boat.

"Aren't they peculiar-looking creatures, Margaret?" said Katherine, as a half-dozen men, with dust-coloured sheets as clothes and enormous shocks of hair, walked past.

"Those are Bishareen Arabs, Mrs. Oswald. Don't you remember the 'fuzzy wuzzy' of Rudyard Kipling? Those are types."

"Oh, yes, but are they not straight and symmetrical and they have thin lips and fine features. Where do they live, Mr. Haswell?"

"In the Soudan; they look exactly like the desert, don't they?"

"They remind me a great deal of our Indians, except for the hair," said Margaret.

There were four five-foot hurdles erected at intervals, and six tall young fellows essayed to contest. They only knew that there were some English shillings, or Egyptian piastres, at the last hurdle

for the first one to get there, and, as they started, they looked in the distance like some queer two-footed beasts.

"How beautifully they jump," said Mr. Carter, who had just joined them.

"I hope Mr. Brown can get some good pictures."

"He has had excellent results so far," said Jack.

"Look, look, that tall one must have been holding back; I noticed him almost the last, and now he leads them all," cried Margaret.

"Bravo, the tall one has won; he must have been coached."

"They don't wear any more clothes in track athletics than we do, do they?" said Billie. "Then, too, I watched them as they took each hurdle, and the position in clearing them was exactly the same as at our intercollegiate games."

"Well, when you analyse it, why shouldn't they know as well, or better than we, how to save every ounce of strength and use it to the best purpose. They are, compared to us, what the lynx is to the domestic cat or the wolf to the dog. They probably depend somewhat on their natural gifts, muscular and mental, for their livelihood."

"I think there is a good deal in what you say, Van," added Jack.

"Well, what do you say, ladies, to our starting back? The buffalo race is next on the programme, and, although I don't apprehend any such accident as the camel affair, yet you all expressed a wish to go."

"I am ready," answered Margaret.

"Let us all go ; we've seen the most interesting part already."

They made their way to the entrance and, mounting their donkeys, were soon jogging back to the town.

The sun was shining down in its afternoon splendour. In front of them, as they moved along, lay the squalid little town. They could see the obelisk of Luxor temple in the distance. Between them and it were the waving palms, with their ceaseless, sleepy movement, the spider-web mimosa, and the odds and ends of a faded grandeur, here a goat-headed sphinx with body and legs all gone, there a hieroglyph-covered slab half-buried in the sand, and all round were mud walls enclosing a mud hovel, about which, children, goats, chickens and donkeys gambolled, slept, ate and lived in one heterogeneous combination. What a contrast to the Egypt of old, the Egypt centre of the world, the Egypt with its million upon millions of inhabitants !

It makes one wonder whether, within the next few thousand years, civilisation, and all it implies, will, still travelling westward, come around again to this cradle of the nations, and then what !

That night the ball at the Luxor Hotel took place.

"Think of it," said Margaret, "a fancy dress ball at Luxor."

Mr. Carter and Doctor Van called for them and they all walked up to the hotel. Although none of

them were in costume, they found the ball full of all kinds of possibilities for pleasure. In the quadrille, in which the Doctor and Margaret found themselves, were Cleopatra and a donkey boy, a Syce and a Pasha.

Billie was introduced to a young French girl who was dressed as a fellaheen woman. He discovered at once that she spoke little or no English. Here was a rare opportunity to air his limited knowledge of French. "*Bon Soir*" was easy enough, but when she replied: "*Bon Soir ; vous êtes étranger à Luxor, nest ce pas ?*" it was different. Billie thought for an instant and then answered, "*Oui*," thinking this would be safe but inwardly praying that his partner would dance and say no more. He saw, too late, that he had gotten himself into trouble with his foolish "*Bon Soir*." After a moment of embarrassing silence his partner said in an injured voice:

"*C'est dommage de perdre cette valse ?*"

Billie was floored! He looked helplessly about him, and then the happy thought came that he had said "*Oui*" the last time and that variety was called for. So putting on his best Parisian accent, he boldly said: "*Non*." His partner looked at him with wondering eyes, and a moment later the floor manager brought up a new comer and Billie, hot and embarrassed, clumsily withdrew.

Katherine did not dance, and for most of the evening Mr. Carter was her cavalier, the curate and engineer filling in occasional gaps. Jack pleaded fatigue

and remained on the boat. He had been far from well lately. A spirit of unrest had seized him and had worked on both mind and body to a point where he had been of little use to himself or those about him. He knew this perfectly and made brave efforts to shake off the depression. That face in the garden haunted him day and night, and he longed to be gone from the place and follow.

When asked by Van he stated frankly that he did not feel at all himself and thought the bracing air of Assouan would help him. Van knew that something, the exact nature of which he was ignorant, was sapping the spirit, even the life, of his old friend. His conjecture and that of Haswell was that he was not happy in his second marriage, but further than this general proposition, they were in the dark.

The following morning found them skimming along with a favouring breeze toward Komombos. Late in the afternoon, they were within sight of the propylons of Edfoo temple. The sun was sinking, and the massive gateway had taken on the brilliant purple-pink colouring so characteristic of Egypt. The *Anmon-Ra* tied up at the bank, and most of the party rode a mile inland to inspect the grand old temple.

CHAPTER XIV.

FIVE days later, the *Ammon-Ra* approached Assouan and the first cataract of the Nile. The night previous, they had tied up near a small village a few miles below, not having been able to push on further on account of the failing wind.

Almost as soon as the sun had dissipated the darkness, Jack Oswald was on deck, nervous and excited at the prospect of again coming in sight of the *Kinet-el-Nil*.

Selim had told him that it would be noon before they could hope to reach the island of Elephantine, where all the dahabeahs lay moored. Jack sat on one of the divans and gazed dreamily at the water and shore as they coursed along, now so close as almost to touch, and again following the channel out to midstream.

On the bank above, as they sailed slowly by, stood a solitary figure. A long black gown enveloped his form. His head was incased in a snow-white turban. In front of him lay a soft mat. His back was toward the river. He was looking toward the grey-yellow hills, which separate the Nile Valley from the Arabian Desert. He was looking toward the slowly rising sun. It was a Moslem at prayer. Suddenly, with a graceful movement, he fell to his

knees. His head struck the mat in front, and he remained for some moments in an attitude of entire self-abasement. As suddenly again, and without the use of his hands, he resumed the upright pose and stood erect. Again and again he prostrated himself. At last he gathered together his mat and staff, and, with slow and solemn step and mien, proceeded on his way. His prayer had gone forth to God and Mecca. A group of the fellaheen, men, women and children, went trooping by on the narrow path at the river's edge. A string of camels, two or three daintily stepping donkeys, and a couple of jackal-looking dogs accompanied the party. The women were clothed in long, black mantles, reaching to the ground. Nothing was visible but the eyes. Their feet were bare. One of them descended to the water's edge and disclosed her brown, sturdy, well-shaped legs. The boys were romping along in light blue cotton gowns—their only garment; a small, white, close-fitting capote completing the costume. It was a family proceeding to the day's work in the field. As they trudged, they chanted some wild Arab love song. The boys chased along the bank and shouted, "Backsheesh, backsheesh, Howadje."

Jack did not feel like talking, but during the morning the rest of the party seemed in the best of spirits. As they approached the town, they noticed the collection of white buildings along the river front to the left, and the bugle note ringing out on the still air called their attention to the dusky, red

fezzed soldiers, on one of the parade grounds, of what is becoming Egypt's formidable army. At this moment, Selim came to Haswell and asked if he could speak to him. They both went aft, and soon Haswell returned.

"Jack, you ought to come and see what has happened, but no, I will tell you. Do you remember at dinner last evening, we heard a sudden jar just before we tied up. Well, the tiller broke. You know it's that unwieldy iron affair. They couldn't fix it. The rudder post had gone down out of sight in its socket, so the old pilot has kept a man lashed down there ever since, to obey orders as regards port and starboard, with two of those large oars, also lashed to the old rudder. Selim says that had there been any but a favourable breeze, we would have been obliged to stay a few miles below here, until a tug or steamer could have picked us up."

"Why, he must have been in the water a good part of the time."

"He was, but you know it only lasted from day-break until now."

They had almost reached their mooring. The small forest of masts indicated the location of other dahabeahs, and high on the hill beyond, the old fort, relic of the Soudan war, looked down upon the town, a sullen reminder of the bloody past. As they neared the island, Selim called attention to a bright-coloured, canopied boat which he told them

had just come through the cataract. The Nubian boatmen were chanting a love song. The music was wilder but more harmonious than anything they had yet heard, and seemed to fit the rugged scenery of their surroundings. They were told that all crews of small boats, which are now almost the only ones to shoot the cataracts, chant a thanksgiving at certain points of the rapids which are considered more dangerous than others.

They glided softly to the bank. Jack strained his eyes in vain. He could not see the *Kinet-el-Nil* among the half-dozen boats. He turned to Selim, and his question was answered before being asked.

"The *Kinet-el-Nil* has gone up to the second cataract, sir."

"Oh, indeed," murmured Jack, disappointed.

"Haven't I read, Selim, that the great quarries, from which the obelisks and statues were taken, are near Assouan?" asked Sister Anne.

"Yes, my lady, from over there under the lookout tower, and back in the desert. You will see one obelisk there only half quarried, lying with two sides shaved off, and the other two still part of the rock."

"How interesting that must be. How did they split the stone, I wonder?"

"Just as they do to-day—drill holes first, and then drive in wooden wedges and pour water over them. The wedges swell simultaneously and the rock

cleaves apart," explained Van Beuren. "But the most marvellous thing of it all is how they moved them."

"I remember in the tombs at Beni-Hassan, don't you, on the walls, the picture of thousands of men pulling a great car, with a statue on it, the overseer standing in the front part of the car with a long whip?" said Billie.

"And we must remember," said Van, "that these workmen were slaves. In every war in which the Rameses, or Pharaohs, were successful, they brought thousands of captives back, who were made slaves and forced to work like beasts of the field."

"Well, no matter how you try to account for these gigantic works, the fact still remains that the people quarried obelisks and other monoliths, weighing thousands of tons and miles from the river's bank, carried them in some way to the bank, and transported them by a boat, or boats, down a shallow stream hundreds of miles, and then placed them upright on handsome pedestals, often some miles back from the river again."

"I don't know," quoth Father Haswell, "that any of you are old enough to remember what a fuss was made over Commander Goringe when he brought our little Central Park Obelisk from Alexandria. It is a small one, yet the bringing of it safely to New York was considered a great piece of engineering."

At luncheon, which was late, on account of their desire to remain on deck and see the town as they approached it, Haswell suggested that they should leave the boat the following day, and take the small steamer at Shelal above the cataract, and go up to Wadi-Halfa.

"The *Prince Abbas* leaves day after to-morrow morning, Selim tells me. She is not full and we would almost own her; the whole trip can be done in six days."

"What is there to see above here?" asked Margaret.

"The greatest, or rather the most marvellous of all the temples, Abou Simbel. The scenery, too, is quite different above the cataract. I have never been above Philae, so I only speak from hearsay."

Finally, after a talk, they decided to go by the little railroad to Shelal and visit Philae during the day, sleep on the *Abbas*, and begin the ascent of the river the following morning. During luncheon, a row boat was seen approaching from the town, and in a few moments Selim brought in a generous assortment of mail. It was voted that no one should open a letter until the meal was over. This decision hastened the repast, and over their coffee they began the delightful task, all too short, of reading letters from home. An exclamation from Haswell caused them to look up.

"No bad news, Charlie, I hope," said Jack.

"No, and yes; Balford is engaged to be married!"

A chorus of "What," and "I don't believe it," and "Who to," followed.

"He writes me, among other things, 'I received word in Cairo from New York, which made it unnecessary to hurry back, so I have been here for nearly three weeks, and now take pleasure in letting you and all your party know, that I have fallen from the high pedestal of bachelorhood on which you and Van and I have so long stood, like three male graces or scapegraces, and have become engaged to be married. You have all met the lady, Miss Clinton the younger, Mary by name. We expect to be married in New York in June, giving you all ample time to get back and help me out.'"

While Haswell was reading, Katherine sat with hands clenched, white face, and flashing eyes.

"I don't believe it," she said in a voice so changed that every one looked at her. "If Mr. Balford had really become engaged, he would have written to me."

Haswell saw that the woman had forgotten herself, and that the situation was becoming embarrassing, so in his cheery voice he remarked :

"Oh, well, let us all go on deck ; we mustn't miss an afternoon like this."

Katherine went to her room and was followed in a few moments by her husband. His pride was deeply wounded. His wife had revealed her feeling toward Balford to the whole company and he felt that he could not let it pass unnoticed. After

knocking, he entered her stateroom and closed the door. He thought he saw traces of tears in her eyes.

"I am very sorry that you had so little control over your feelings as to show to all on board that you are still in love with my friend Balford, Katherine. As long as I am legally your husband, I have some feeling, some rights, and a scene like that at the table must not occur again."

Katherine did not look at nor answer him, and, a moment later, after waiting in vain for some shadow of repentance or remorse, he opened the door and left the room. He reached the deck just in time to join a party of four, Sister Anne, Margaret, Van and Billie, who were about to cross the river to inspect the bazaars of Assouan.

Lying on the confines of Nubia and not far from the Soudan, the bazaars at this place are very interesting. The articles of interest to the traveller, at this day, are the weapons, many of them spurious, but many relics of the Dervish rebellion, old flint-lock Arabian pistols, dervish and Bedouin guns and every variety of sword and scimitar. Then, too, there are the more primitive weapons, spears, assegais and lances, and aboriginal garments and ornaments, both of shell and metal. The party wandered about the bazaars for an hour, immensely interested in all they saw. Selim was with them and kept the too importunate vendors at bay with his short donkey whip. Margaret bought some

Soudanese baskets and costumes, and the men indulged in some old arms and instruments. When at last they emerged from the bazaars and walked over to the clean, white, well-kept little hotel, it was a great relief to their eyes, ears and noses.

Selim made a signal across the river, and soon the felucca from the *Anmon-Ra* appeared, and they all returned to the boat. That night, after all the others had gone below, Jack and Van sat smoking alone. Van had been waiting for such an opportunity and now it seemed to present itself.

"Jack, old man, you worry me. Can't you take a brace? I think I understand part of the situation."

"Van, I do try; I try to do the right thing, but when a man gets a facer like that at lunch, what can one do?"

"That was a facer, sure enough. I had suspected something of that kind. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing; what can I do? We may have to live apart when we go back. This is not the most serious part of it, however."

"Why, Jack, what do you mean?"

"I mean," answered Jack, and he leaned closer, and a distinct tremor came into his voice, "I mean that I believe that my Clare is alive!"

Van started up and gazed incredulously at his friend.

At the first instant, he thought that Jack had

gone mad, then, quick as a flash, things and events crowded into his mind, and he leaped from his chair and began to pace silently up and down the deck. He dropped again into the seat and in slow and changed voice said :

“ Jack, am I to understand—”

“ You are to understand,” said Jack slowly, and interrupting, “ that I believe that my Clare is alive and on board the *Kinet-el-Nil* ! ”

“ Good God, Jack, can it be so ? ”

“ I met her in the Luxor Gardens. Van, I cannot be wrong, but she did not know me. I spoke to her, begged and pled with her, but she said I was mistaken, she had never seen me before. Oh, Van, I have longed for death since then.”

“ Jack, let us go slow and sift this matter. I see now why I was so affected by the sight of this lady, for I, too, met her in the Luxor Gardens.”

“ How can I, her husband, be mistaken, Van ? It is out of the question. It is only five years ago. She has changed, but not a great deal ; the eyes, the voice, are just the same.”

Then Van remembered what Haswell had told him of the conversation on board the *Columbia* the night of the illumination. The Englishmen had said that she was an American, and had some mysterious history, which they themselves did not know. It made Van's heart beat faster to think of it. Yet he could not reconcile many facts. Why had she spurned Jack, if it was Clare ? How *could*

she have helped showing some recognition. He remembered well the adoration she had had for her husband in the old days. Even if she had heard of his second marriage, could she control herself thus? The friends sat long and talked, and when they parted, Van was as much in the dark as ever; but he had silently determined to see the head of the party on the *Kinet-el-Nil* and find out all he could. He felt that it was his duty to do so. He was perplexed beyond words. He had started that evening to have a serious talk with Jack about his relations with Katherine, which had become so openly strained that every one noticed it, but this new possibility was so overwhelming, that it swallowed up all other thought.

In the morning they all went to Philae by rail. They took just enough baggage to last them for the week. At the end of the little road, at the little village of El Shelal, they descended the bank and got into one of the roomy boats which was waiting for them, and they were soon ferried to the island of Philae. El Shelal signifies, in Arabic, "the rapids," and the contrast of the little hamlet of mud houses on one side, and the massive grandeur of the eternal temples on the other, was picturesque and impressive. "The Kiosk of Trajan" or "Pharaoh's bed chamber," as it is called, stands high on the rocky shore. Its majestic size and perfect symmetry make it one of the finest, though not among the oldest, of Egyptian monuments. On one side

is a fine grove of drooping palms, and, as they approached, a handsome dahabeah was seen moored to the pebbly beach beneath. The temple could be seen beyond, rearing its great propylons to the skies. They spent the whole day at Philae. The sky was, as always, a sapphire blue. No breath of air was stirring. When they reached the south end of the island, and looked up the row of colonnades toward the great Pylons, they could not repress a cry of wonder and delight, and when they entered the great temple of Isis, they were wonderstruck at the brilliance of the colouring of the roof and columns, bright blue, green, reds and yellows mingling in most artistic manner. In this hall they found an artist engaged in transferring a group of columns to his canvas. They fell into conversation with him and his wife. It transpired at once that he was an American and the owner of the dahabeah moored to the shore. Haswell and his party were invited to go on board in the afternoon, and see the pictures and have tea.

So they moved from one hall to another, lost in wonderment at the solid grandeur of the old ruin. Finally they assembled in the Kiosk of Trajan for luncheon, which had been sent up from the *Ammon-Ra*.

After luncheon they sauntered off in various directions, and Margaret and Billie found themselves sitting together on a fallen obelisk, seemingly in the relation of artist and critic, for Margaret had taken

her sketching pad and Billie was giving his opinion of her efforts very freely. Engaged thus it became necessary to come quite close together, and suddenly Billie put his arm about her waist and said boldly :

"Margaret, will you marry me when we go back to New York?"

"Yes, I will ; now let me finish my sketch."

"Not until we have sealed the bargain," said Billie, and began to seal it, but during the process, the head and face of Sister Anne turned the corner near by, and, with a little frightened cry from Margaret, the lovers sprang apart. The cry coming from Sister Anne contained no suspicion of fear. It was rather one of righteous indignation with a flavour of scorn thrown in.

"I should like an explanation, Miss Jones, if one were possible, for such unseemly conduct."

"There is no explanation, Sister Anne," spoke up Billie, made brave and independent in his great happiness. "I was kissing Margaret, that was all."

"All!" gasped Sister Anne, "and do you call it nothing to act in a most improper manner toward a young woman, and in public, too."

"No one saw us but Osiris and Isis and some other of those old gods, and they didn't say anything until you came along and spoiled the fun."

"Miss Jones," spluttered Sister Anne excited and almost ready to faint with shame at what she had seen, "I had thought differently of you. I thought

you were a respectable, self-respecting girl, but now my eyes are opened."

"Why, Sister Anne, for I must call you so now, your brother and I have become engaged, and are to be married when we get back to America. We had intended keeping it a secret, but, now that you have discovered us, we want you to be our ally and friend."

"To be married! Why, you are both too young to think of such a thing," answered Sister Anne, slightly mollified and somewhat flattered by their enforced confidence in her.

"Why, Sister Anne," cried Margaret, "I am twenty-five nearly, and if I go on much longer, I shall be called an old—I mean, I am quite old enough to marry, and Billie is a year older at least."

Sister Anne had sunk down on a fallen pillar, and was fanning herself violently with the pretty green woven fan bought from one of the little children on the bank. Finally she said:

"Well, it is such a surprise and shock that I must think it over prayerfully before I can decide what to do."

"I wrote home about it ten days ago, so you needn't bother about that, Sister," said Billie.

This was a slight prevarication but it served its purpose.

"Oh, that is a great relief, for I was thinking of how I could break the news to Father and Mother."

"Well, it isn't a death or a funeral, Sister, and I

am mighty happy," and with that he set another impressive seal on Margaret's burning cheek.

"Well, where have you been?" shouted the cheery Haswell, as he clambered up the rocks from the other side. "I have been hunting high and low for you, Miss Brown. Aren't you all going to call on the artist and his wife?"

"Yes, is it time to go?"

"Yes, we said about four, and it is now after half-past."

"You had better come, too, Billie and Margaret," said Sister Anne, in a significant manner.

"All right," said Billie with cheerful voice but rueful face, and *sotto voce* to Margaret, as he helped her down, "our fun is spoiled; she has us now, and we shall never be left alone if she can prevent it, selfish old bird that she is."

"Hush, Billie; we can wheedle her into lots of things, if we try in the right way."

So they descended the hill by a flight of rough steps, cut from the bank, and went on board the *Isis*.

They spent a delightful hour inspecting the artistic boat and the art treasures it contained. As the shadows of the Kiosk were lengthening across the river, they went aboard their small boat and were rowed to the *Prince Abbas*, which was to start at eight o'clock the following morning for Wadi-Halfa. As Haswell had predicted, they found but few passengers on board; a party of Germans, "personally conducted," eight or ten in number, who, without exception, ate with their knives and

plunged their forks into each and every dish brought on the table.

They sat at one end of the table, however ; an Austrian Baron and his wife, a Mr. Harrison, English, and Herr Klein, a Swiss, making up the complement of passengers. Katherine was placed next to the Baron, and immediately began a conversation with him in French.

The evening meal over, the party sat on deck in the moonlight. They wondered at the great change in the character of the scenery from that just below. Here all was rocky and forbidding, while below the valley was broad, flat and fertile.

Before most of the party were astir the following morning, the *Abbas* cast off from Shelal, and soon the island of Philae passed from view at a turn in the stream. At breakfast they became a little better acquainted with their immediate table neighbours. Katherine continued her conversation with the Baron, to the evident annoyance of the Baroness, who sat alone, and could have no converse with the knife-swallowing Germans below, and no chance to talk with her husband, who, on his part, did not notice his wife any more than if she had been a stranger. There was one character, however, on board, who deserves more than passing notice. This was Herr Klein. Van Beuren had made his acquaintance soon after they had started, but this was cemented into strong friendship before they parted six days later. Herr Klein was short, past middle life, with grey hair, bleary eyes and poor

complexion. He was an enthusiast about everything. His eyes would fill with tears whenever he spoke of a fine view, of a flower, or of an operatic selection.

One day as he sat near, Margaret was humming an aria from one of the operas, and immediately Herr Klein joined in, in his poor little voice, then with tears in his eyes, he exclaimed :

"Ach ! I loaf that aria. I once hear Malten sing him. I go every night. I send flowers. I write Malten I loaf her, and one day I was invited to meet her. I go. I was so excited. I say, 'Madame, the honour is too great,' so I cry, and go away to tell my wife."

Each day Herr Klein had one of the crew in his cabin for an hour, in order to learn Arabic. Then, on landing, he would gather a crowd of children about him, give a little backsheesh, and try to talk with them in Arabic. It was most laughable to see the little savages helping Herr Klein over the ruins. One day just as they were leaving Kalabshe, Billie said :

"Oh, Herr Klein, did you see that superb view from the hill over there ?"

"Ach ! nein, was it then so grand ? I must see it. I will get the pilot to wait," and with tears in his eyes he started down to stop the boat.

At seven o'clock one evening they came to Abou Simbel, the grandest of all the monuments. The sun had gone below the hills and the full moon was just rising large and yellow.

CHAPTER XV.

"PASS me my shawl, Clare, dear," said Lady Wiltshire to Clare Grant, who sat near her on the deck of the *Kinet-el-Nil*.

"Yes, Mother," and the young woman handed her the light afghan.

The *Kinet-el-Nil* had been at Assouan now for two days, and the influence of Sir John's adventurous spirit had caused them to arrange to go up the cataract and river as far as their time would permit. They had just entered the gateway to Nubia and the Soudan, and all were on deck, Sir John and Lady Wiltshire, Henry Villiers, young Lord Annersley and Miss Grant.

The men were leaning over the side of the boat and the dragoman was pointing out the cartouches on the rocks, the nilometer at the further end of the island, and the quarries on the other side of the river, indicated by the rows of wedge-shaped marks where the huge pieces of granite had been split away. The breeze had sprung up lightly from the south, and, it being quite early in the morning, the wrap asked for by Lady Wiltshire was very welcome. Lady Wiltshire was one of those wholesome, middle-aged English women, whose personality draws one instinctively toward them. She was

nearly sixty years of age, yet a picture of ruddy health. She wore the conventional white cap, and her hair was parted in the middle and brushed down on either side, almost concealing her ears. Her dress was of black silk, and she fitted perfectly the picture of the English matron of John Leech of thirty years ago. Her disposition was in keeping with her sweet and kindly face. Her husband, Sir John, was a bluff hearty man, a type of the English county gentleman. He had been, up to five years back, plain John Wiltshire, Esquire. He had, however, represented his borough twice in Parliament, and, having endowed a library and hospital from moneys acquired in his manufacturing business, had been knighted. He had a handsome country place near Chippenham and was immensely popular at home.

Every one in the country spoke of him as "Sir John," and, in fact, many of the country folk were ignorant as to his last name. He had for some years owned a large and handsome yacht, the *Czarina*, which he kept at Cowes, and in which he was accustomed to make more or less extended trips.

The *Kinet-el-Nil* slowly approached the island called Sehel. To this place, the progress up the cataract is easily accomplished. On the island, as they neared it, could be seen nearly a hundred half-dressed men and boys, waiting, under the commands of a sheik, to take charge of the boat and pull and pole her up the rushing stream. The dahabeah had started early, in order to accomplish the

passage of the cataract before sunset, for after this hour, neither threats nor money would avail, and the boat would be left wherever she might chance to be.

From the time of leaving Assiut, weeks ago, the party had been a quiet and comfortable one. The men were old and very congenial friends. Sir John was much older than Annersley and somewhat the senior of Henry Villiers, but they were all three Oxford men, and had met often at home, where Annersley and Villiers had been guests at Laurie Hall. The two had already met Miss Grant, but had never become really acquainted with her. She had been introduced as Lady Wiltshire's companion, and, one night, the year before, immediately after dinner, when the ladies had retired and the sweet soprano voice was wafted to them from the old baronial hall, Villiers had asked Sir John who she might be.

"Now, Villiers, you have me. Some day I will tell you a very remarkable story, but not just now, for my wife and I have decided to answer no questions at present on the subject."

"Why, Sir John, you puzzle me. The lady looks like some fair goddess or mythological character, perhaps Andromeda rescued from the Rock, but, to tell the truth, you do not quite fill my idea of Perseus."

"Thanks, Henry; now you certainly will get no information."

"How about me, Sir John?" quoth Annersley.

"Arcades Ambo," laughed Sir John.

So, when they met again on the Nile, the two hunters from Somaliland were no wiser than before. They were reintroduced, but, whereas Miss Grant was invariably amiable and always ready to sing for them, still there was a settled quietness of demeanour, an apparent aversion to be led into conversation or argument, which made her doubly interesting. Her handsome face and fine presence would attract the eye anywhere. Her reticence, her musical voice and self-contained manner, made every one wish to know her better. She was an excellent listener, and apparently took the deepest interest in all the hunting stories and adventures of young Annersley. This always flatters a man. After a week or two, Annersley began to think that she was interested in him, as much as in his stories. He certainly began to be much interested in her. He did not sing himself, but loved music, and whenever he asked her to play she would do so. He had not yet asked for a single ballad, English, French or German, which she had not at once been able to play and sing for him, and when she sang, there was such a heartfelt, tender sadness in her voice, that it almost brought tears to the eyes. He unconsciously became deeply interested, and one day at Komombos, when Villiers and Sir John had gone off quail shooting, he found Lady Wiltshire on deck alone and broached the subject to her.

"Lady Wiltshire, I have waited for such an opportunity as this to ask your advice," he began, in a low voice. "You have always been so kind to me, that I feel that you like me, and so I have no hesitation in making a confidante of you. I wish to ask you about Miss Grant."

"Well, Percy, what do you wish to know? I am, as you say, very fond of you, and will do a great deal for you."

"Lady Wiltshire, I have become very much interested in this young woman, more so than I have cared to admit, but I never seem to get further with her than the most ordinary acquaintance. I do not understand her, and I wanted to ask you what you know about her."

Lady Wiltshire sat quiet for some time. She saw that the young man was much in earnest, and she did not know exactly what to do. She could see no harm, however, in view of Annersley's seriousness, in telling him what she herself knew, and in risking the displeasure of Sir John. So she began:

"Percy, I will tell you all that I myself know, and you can be guided by what you hear. It is now just five years since I first saw Miss Grant, as we call her, for this is not her real name. I do not know her name. Sir John and I were cruising off the Bahamas in the *Czarina*. We were about thirty miles from Nassau, when, one noon, our sailing master reported a deserted row-boat some two

miles away. Through the glass, we could all make it out. Sir John ordered Scott to sail over to it and see what it was. As we came closer we could make out that there was something in the boat. It might have been a bundle of rags or a human body. Our surprise was only equalled by our pity when we ran alongside and they brought on board the living but unconscious body of a beautiful young woman. The boat was oarless, her bow stove in, and she was a third full of water. Of course, we did all we could for the young woman. There was no name on the boat, and but one name on the clothes of the cast-away. An embroidered 'Clare' appeared on a number of articles of her underwear, but that was all.

"She had a cut and bruise on the left side of her head. Gradually she regained consciousness, but her memory of what had gone before was a blank. In fact, she seemed like a child in intellect, while she was so reduced physically that it was weeks and weeks before she could sit up. I took full charge of her. We ran into Havana and telegraphed to the papers in both New York and London, but from that day to this we have never discovered the identity of Clare. I am not sorry, I must say, for I have learned to love her as a daughter, and so has Sir John. She is without doubt an American, for many phrases she uses are peculiar to Americans, and her intonation is not English."

Lady Wiltshire paused, and young Annersley waited to hear the end of the remarkable story.

"I have said that Clare seemed like a child, and so she did, mentally, but she had lost none of her physical accomplishments, for, as soon as she was quite herself again, she would sit at the piano and her fingers would run over the keys, without her knowing, seemingly, what she was playing, and so with her voice; she did not use words to fit the music, but she sang weird snatches of song apparently without knowing that she was doing so. As time went on she developed most marvellously. Everything seemed new to her, yet now, five years since her life began, as it were, she is the peer of any woman of her age."

"Why, Lady Wiltshire, this all sounds to me like a fairy tale. I knew that there was some deep mystery about Miss Grant, but this exceeds anything I have ever heard. Have you ever consulted a specialist?"

"Yes, Sir William Hosmer told us that it was not a unique case. He says that the accident, or whatever it was, and the blow on the head, must have reacted on her brain, in a manner to cause loss of memory and mentality for the time, that all memory for past events was driven away, and that she actually began life again in our boat. However, with all her past training and evident accomplishments, she came back again, very quickly, to her intellectual level. As far as a return of mem-

ory and a remembrance as to who she was, and her past life, the doctor could prophesy nothing, but said there were cases on record where a second severe mental shock had brought back the memory of past events, and placed the patient exactly back in mind where he was when the first shock came."

"Extraordinary!" ejaculated Annersley; "but tell me, Lady Wiltshire, have you ever noticed any sign of mental weakness in her?"

"Quite the reverse, Percy; she is extraordinarily quick in everything. Her slight diffidence or embarrassment at times is due, probably, to the fact that for the first two and a half years after she came to us, we kept her very much to ourselves. She was, during this time, relearning what she had lost."

Percy Annersley thought for a moment, and then said:

"Lady Wiltshire, I will respect your confidence in me and never, except by your permission, shall I mention what you have told me."

"Very well, Percy. But see, there come our hunters."

"Well, what luck?"

"Oh, we bowled over a few, about forty, I think."

"Bravo, but what do the little beggars look like? Let me see one. Little chaps, aren't they?"

"Yes, but they can fly."

"Ah, Miss Grant, how have you been spending this warm afternoon?" said Annersley, as Clare Grant appeared.

"You will think me very lazy, but I have been lying in my stateroom, reading."

"It must have been a very fascinating book, to have kept you below deck on such an afternoon."

"It was fascinating—Paul Bourget's 'Antigone'; it is both sad and interesting."

"I have not read it. Will you let me have it when you are through with it?"

"Certainly. I am through with it now, and will bring it to you at dinner." . . .

As the *Kinet-el-Nil* came close to the island of Sehel, a cable was thrown ashore, and soon dozens of half-clothed Nubians were swarming over her sides; two climbed the mast and made fast a rope, well up on the stick; another hawser was fastened at the bow, and, as the horde of blacks started to tow, they were about equally divided on shore, in the water and on the boat, and the din of their voices as they shouted, chanted and called upon all the saints in the calendar, was almost deafening.

So the boat made her way slowly up the current, which became swifter and more turbulent at every fifty yards. On almost every rock stood a number of nude boys, each provided with a small log of wood. As the boat approached, the logs were tossed into the seething current and after them the boys, like so many rats. It was wonderful to see with what dexterity they would find the logs and use them. The frantic appeals for backsheesh were too much for Sir John, who threw innumer-

able piastres and sixpences to the dusky divers. Towards four o'clock they could see Philæ in the distance, and, at sundown, they were anchored off Shelal. The following day, with favouring wind, they rushed up the river. The transformation from below to above the first cataract of the Nile was a very sudden one. The river banks were generally precipitous and rocky, and the rocks were not the great sheer faces met with occasionally below, but rather the broken-up, rounded masses of brown and black boulders, looking like the petrified, boiled-over bubbles of a gigantic cauldron. There were many islets of the same formation, and on them, where soil had collected during the inundation, were stunted trees, sycamore, mimosa and palms. The small strips of sand along the river side were cultivated in some sort of way, and not until they were well up toward Wadi-Halfa was there any of the luxuriant vegetation and groves of trees seen below Assouan.

Percy Annersley, after his confidential talk with Lady Wiltshire, was, more than ever, interested in Clare Grant. The history of her short life had all the flavour of romance and the doubt and surmise as to who she really was, and what her past had been, invested her, to an unlimited degree, with mystery and uncertainty. As he found her to-day, as Villiers, with whom he had talked, saw her, she was a superlatively attractive woman. Annersley's growing love was so mingled with high respect and

admiration, that it was different from any feeling he had yet experienced.

One night after dinner, Villiers and Annersley were walking along the river bank smoking :

" Remarkable woman that," said Villiers; " can't understand it at all. Have asked Wiltshire, three or four times; always the same, some mystery,—gad, I'd give a five-pound note to know about it, and I am not curious by nature, either."

" She's well born and bred, any one can see that," answered Annersley, who would have cut off his hand sooner than violate the confidence that had been placed in him.

" If I were not a confirmed old bachelor, I tell you, Percy, I'd be in danger, and might make a fool of myself, for I don't believe she is of the marrying kind." . . .

With favouring winds, they were able to get as far as Abou Simbel, but were obliged to give up Wadi-Halfa and the second cataract. The *Kinet-el-Nil* had been chartered for two months only, and even now the dragoman was doubtful whether he could reach Cairo within the prescribed limits. Reluctantly they turned their boat down stream. On the third day, about noon, they sighted the *Abbas* coming up. As they neared each other, there was the usual dipping of flags and saluting. Those on the *Kinet-el-Nil* waved to those on the *Abbas* and vice versa. Villiers stood at the rail with his glass. They were passing quite close.

"By Jove, Percy, there is Haswell and all that *Ammon-Ra* party; they must have left their boat at Assouan."

"Jolly lot that, seem to enjoy life, forever chaffing each other; that's a habit with lots of Americans."

One man on the *Abbas* sat way forward of the saloon, which was on deck. He had looked for the dahabeah since breakfast. On the plea of searching for crocodiles, he had kept his glass in use almost unceasingly.

"Why, Uncle Jack," said Margaret to him, once during the morning, "you don't look for crocodiles miles ahead; they tell me that they appear for all the world like old logs lying against the sand bars."

"I know," answered Jack, "but I am locating all the log-looking objects way ahead, for further reference when we come closer."

As they approached the dahabeah, Jack could hear his heart thump. He descried one woman's figure on the deck, but it was not she. Yet, even as he looked, another lady ascended to the deck and seated herself near the first. The boats were almost abreast. She was passing away from him again! With a strong effort he calmed himself and gazed. He could see that she was engaged in some kind of fancy work. He saw her look up and smile at some remark made to her by one of the men, then she walked over to the rail and looked in their direction. Was she looking at him? He

lowered his glass and gazed, but in a moment she had turned and had resumed her seat and sewing. The *Kinet-el-Nil* passed far astern, and Jack's hand and glass fell listlessly in his lap.

"Have I," he thought, "committed sins heinous enough to merit this slow torture? How much longer must I suffer and have this wound torn open at every turn?"

Reaction came to him, however, and that evening he tried to be more companionable. He sat next to Herr Klein at table, and he told some stories which made the dear little Swiss both weep and laugh at intervals. . . .

Moonlight at Abou Simbel is an event in one's life; sunrise is wonderful but moonlight is weird, awe-inspiring, grand. Go alone, fifty yards below the entrance, and sit and look. The temple is hewn from the solid rock mountain. The entrance is guarded by four colossal statues of Rameses, each more than sixty feet in height. The figures are seated in majestic repose. In the centre, with two statues on either side, is the entrance. Above all is a sort of frieze in relief, extending the full width of the temple. The moon rises above the Arabian hills directly opposite the faces of the statues. The stillness is broken only by the occasional cries of the boatmen, or Arab guides, or the uncanny cry of the hyena.

The temple is not more than fifty yards from the silent, shimmering river. Selim took his party,

separate from the others, and entered the portals. He ignited his magnesium wire, and a dozen giant figures, with the face of Rameses, and the accoutrements of the God Osiris, rose Aladdin-like before them. This was the main hall. On either side were majestic aisles, with brilliantly coloured walls, showing, in excellent bas relief, the deeds of the great King, on both land and sea. Silent, and lost in wonder at this work of the hand of man, they followed their guide. His voice was all that was heard, as it resounded through the empty corridors.

"And all this was hewn out of the solid rock, these enormous halls, and side halls, and corridors, these perfect statues, sixty feet high, and this marvellous writing and drawing—I can scarcely credit my senses!" exclaimed Haswell.

"Yes, sir," said Selim, "but you must see it at sunrise, for then you will know how much they thought of in those days. As the sun rises, it shines for just ten minutes directly in at the great entrance, and lights the temple up most beautiful."

As they went out again into the moonlight, Katherine remarked :

"What would one not give now, to have seen one day's ceremony in this place !"

Billie and Margaret climbed to the foot of one of the statues, and sat for a few moments on one of Rameses' great toes. Then they climbed labouriously the sand slide, at the right of the temple, and tobogganed down on the warm, white sand.

The *Abbas* pushed on to Wadi-Halfa the following morning. At this uninteresting place they saw many of the prisoners of the late Mahdi rebellion, and of the subsequent Dervish uprising. Every prisoner was chained. A large, strong chain was welded to both ankles and an iron shot attached. The sight was a most pitiable one, indeed.

"It seems inhuman, in our enlightened times, to see such cruelty," said Sister Anne.

"Ah, Miss Brown, but have you ever read Gen. Gordon's letters, or, 'Ten Years Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp,' or 'Fire and Sword in the Soudan?'"

"No, I have not."

"Well, if you had, you would know that no punishments could expiate the deeds of that blood-thirsty man and his followers."

"Yes, my lady," said Selim. "I was in the relief expedition to save Gen. Gordon, and I saw most terrible things. You see, every now and then here, a prisoner with his foot gone, sometimes both feet. They were cut off by the Mahdi, or his generals, for some little mistake or disobedience."

Each gang of prisoners was under an Arab soldier, and they were working on the fort and buildings which were in process of erection above the town. At short intervals, the Nubian guard would lash the prisoners over the shoulders with his stout whip or strike them with his bayonet or gun-barrel to expedite their movements. They were mostly a scowling, ill-visaged lot, but now and then a face

of higher type could be seen. One could not but wonder where they had come from, what part of Ethiopia, or Abyssinia or the Soudan, whether they had fathers, mothers, wives or children. They were life prisoners and were herded like cattle.

The German contingent started early on the following morning to visit the second cataract, on donkey back, distant a few miles. Herr Klein started alone. The Haswell party remained on board. It was very cold. They were in the tropics, but the thermometer did not say so. Some days before, they had crossed the Tropic of Cancer. Billie insisted, at that time, that he felt the boat scrape as she went over, and now he asserted, that, on account of the lowness of the river, the boat had caught the tropic and carried it way south to Wadi-Halfa, hence the chilly weather!

The party returned from Abusir before noon, and all except Herr Klein declared the trip a failure. Herr Klein, however, came back with his pockets filled with queer-shaped volcanic rocks. These he distributed to the ladies of the Haswell party as mementoes. He wept as he spoke of the view he had had of the second cataract. At noon the *Abbas* cast off and began her journey down the river. That night they stopped at Abou Simbel and spent the night, in order to see the sunrise again. The journey down was very rapid, and they soon found themselves once more at Shelal and Philae. They

had already engaged a cataract boat to take them down the rapids.

As they drew in to their landing, Selim pointed out the *Kinet-el-Nil* far below and just entering the swift water. Their baggage was sent on to Assouan by the little train, and at two o'clock, after eating a last meal on the *Abbas*, they pushed off, and started on their two hours journey.

CHAPTER XVI.

SIR JOHN and Lady Wiltshire, with Clare Grant, Villiers and Annersley, had left the *Kinet-el-Nil* to be guided down to Assouan again, and had also hired a cataract boat in order to have the excitement of shooting the rapids. They had first gone over to Philae and explored its interesting precincts, and were just descending the steep bank on its opposite side, where their boat was awaiting them, when the Haswell party shot by the point of the island. Each boat was provided with eight Nubian boatmen and a pilot, or reis, and a small boy whose duty seemed to be to pick his way up and down the sides, and with an improvised mallet keep the oar pins pounded firmly in their sockets. The Wiltshire party followed about one hundred yards behind. As the boat, propelled by the large, unwieldy oars, approached the narrower part of the river, one realised the irresistible force of the current.

"It does not seem possible," said Van, "that all the wealth of water one sees spread out below, could come through this narrow gorge, and yet the Nile has no tributaries."

"It must be very deep here to account for it," said Haswell.

"Oh, listen to the roar of the rapids. Is it quite safe, Selim?" asked Sister Anne.

"Oh, yes, my lady; they used to have accidents sometimes, long ago, when they used very small boats, but now they are quite safe. Would you like, sir," turning to Haswell, "to stop and see the men jump into the rapids? We take this channel to the right, and it is a little out of our way."

"Oh, no, I don't believe it is worth while."

Now they enter the dashing current. The men ply their oars with might and main, and the old reis, perched at the stern, looks like an eagle, as with snapping eyes he watches the rocks and the race-ways between. Sometimes the bow is quite out of water, again it plunges down into a maelstrom of surging, roaring foam. The excitement is at a high pitch. The men are shouting and straining every muscle. Suddenly, with a snap like the crack of a pistol, an oarlock gives way. The oarsman is precipitated violently backward and striking his mate in front, causes him also to lose his oar. Before the reis can overcome the sudden veering of the boat, from the loss of its equipoise, the current has swirled the boat around, and she is swinging first sidewise, then stern foremost, and shooting with fearful velocity, and unmanageable, toward the rocks. In vain the boatmen attempt to ward off the crash. On she plunges, and, with a splintering, tearing sound, she strikes a half-submerged boulder stern on. There are wild shrieks from the women as the boat

is pirouetted, spinning around. Katherine has been sitting high on the little covered space behind, in order to get the better view, and, as the boat strikes, she is hurled into the water. The others cling to the shattered craft. Jack leaps to his feet as his wife disappears. In another second he is over and struggling manfully in the foaming torrent to reach the poor woman, who is being helplessly tossed at the mercy of the stream. A hundred yards below, the water is less rapid but Jack's strength is ebbing, and he has been badly bruised. A group of boys, waiting to show their dexterity, were clustered on a large rock below. Three of them swim boldly out. Two reach the floating object and soon tow it with difficulty to a little sand beach. Another tries to help the drowning man, and he too, exhausted, is at last guided to a spot a few yards further down.

As the boat struck, the people of the *Kinet-el-Nil* were but a short distance astern. A cry of horror escaped them, but the reis, in loud commanding voice, bade his men row and keep their eyes in the boat. He guided his craft toward the helpless but floating boat, shouting orders to those left on board of her. He was soon abreast of her but kept well to one side. His crew had ceased rowing, and, as they came up even, a rope was thrown, and, in a moment, his eight stalwart Nubians were rowing with the energy of despair toward the whirling eddies and smoother water against the bank, which at this point was less precipitous. As the boat

swung in, four of her crew leaped overboard and in a few seconds both boats were safely beached.

When Clare Grant saw the beginning of the catastrophe she sat with pallid lips and face, grasping the sides of her seat and staring. Then, as Oswald stood there for that second, she placed her hands suddenly to her head, and then, as in a flash, the cloud seemed to be torn asunder; the sunshine of memory flooded the innermost recesses of her soul, and, with a shuddering sob, and the cry, "Jack, my husband," she sank back and oblivion came to her. In that awful moment of excitement, the memory of her past came back to her and she saw the man she knew to be her husband, the Jack Oswald of five years ago, plunge into the surging waters and disappear. . . .

There were three patients to be cared for when the boats had been made safe. The Englishmen were by the side of Katherine Oswald in a moment. She lay on the stony beach as one dead. Both Sir John and Villiers had had experience with cases of drowning, and in a moment they had raised the limp body and were trying to empty the lungs of water. A little brandy was forced down the throat, and artificial respiration was resorted to. A fluttering pulse could be detected, and friction of the surface was tried. The sailors brought the canopy from the uninjured boat, and made a cover from the sun's fierce rays. Sister Anne was in a state of semi-collapse; but Margaret rose to the occasion, and gave

orders to the men in heroic fashion. She loosened the clothes from her dying friend and rubbed her limbs with brandy, while Villiers and Annersley worked her arms above her head and back again to try to revive the spark, which seemed fast dying out. Meanwhile, Billie, Haswell and Van Beuren had rushed below some distance, to where Jack lay unconscious but breathing. Across his head, over his eyes, was an ugly gash, and an Arab boy was striving to staunch the flow of blood with a handful of dry grass. They forced some brandy down his throat, and, taking off their coats, made a pillow for his head. . . .

As Clare Grant recovered consciousness, she saw Lady Wiltshire bending tenderly over her. She still lay on the carpeted bottom of the boat. As she stared up into the kindly face looking down at her, she murmured:

"Where is he? Take me to him."

"Yes, child, lie quiet, you are all right."

"No, where is he? Take me to him," and her hand went to her eyes as though to hide some dreadful sight. Suddenly, she raised herself forcibly to a sitting posture and gazed wildly about her.

"Oh, tell me where he is! Is he drowned? Tell me," and she grasped Lady Wiltshire's arm frantically.

"Calm yourself, Clare, dear. Who is it you want?" said Lady Wiltshire, thinking the shock had unbal-

anced her reasoning power, but wishing to humour her if she could.

"My husband, Jack, Jack Oswald. Is he dead?" she pleaded.

"Mr. Oswald was saved, dear," answered Lady Wiltshire, now more than ever convinced that her ward had lost her mind.

"Oh, I must go to him; take me to him," and she struggled to her feet.

Lady Wiltshire called her husband, and he came at once.

"Take me to him, Sir John; he is my husband;" and finally she became so insistent, that, supported by Sir John and his wife, she staggered down to where Jack lay. The moment she saw him lying there, she broke away from them, and, throwing herself down beside him, took his head in her lap and stroked his matted hair, kissing his forehead and murmuring tender, loving words to the unconscious man. As Van Beuren stepped back to make room he looked at her.

"God in Heaven! Clare Oswald! Jack was right."

After a moment Jack slowly opened his eyes and looked into those of his wife.

"Clare," he murmured, and his heavy lids closed again. . . .

They worked for an hour over the wet, cold figure of Katherine, but in vain. The pulse beat quicker and fainter, then stopped, then fluttered for a few

seconds, and, though they tried every expedient suggested, at last they were obliged to desist, and the conviction was forced upon them that Katherine Oswald was dead. They covered her body with the awning and left two men on guard.

Their position now was a difficult one. The broken boat was useless for passengers and the remaining one too small to hold them all. At this juncture, Selim suggested that they should send runners across the narrow strip of land which divided the right and left channels, and try to stop the *Kinet-el-Nil*.

This was done, and in half an hour the messengers returned with the news that they had caught the boat about a mile below. Poor Katherine's body was gently lifted and placed on the floor of the small boat. Six men and the reis were to take it down to Assouan, while Haswell and Selim went as guards. They improvised a litter for Jack, who still remained oblivious to his surroundings. Thus the mournful party started slowly across the rough country. The boatmen led the way, and following them were four men carrying the litter. Then followed Sir John and Lady Wiltshire supporting Clare between them. Van Beuren with Sister Anne, Billie helping Margaret, and Annarsley and Villiers brought up the rear. They stumbled silently along the narrow trail. No one spoke. After a full hour's walk, and when the ladies were ready to sink from exhaustion, they spied the masts of the

Kinet-el-Nil behind the rocks and some distance ahead. After they had got on board with considerable difficulty, Jack was hurried to Villiers's room and put to bed. He had already developed a high fever and muttered and talked in most unintelligible fashion. Clare, too, had been taken to her room. Sir John and Lady Wiltshire placed their boat at Haswell's disposal. Sister Anne was in a pitiable condition as the result of the nervous strain, and Lady Wiltshire insisted on her taking some brandy and ammonia and lying down in her stateroom. The rest of the party sat in the saloon and conversed in subdued voices about the terrible catastrophe which had overtaken them. The startling recognition of Jack by Clare puzzled and amazed the English party, and now, in as few words as possible, Van Beuren told them of her former life. He thought it unnecessary to go into any explanation as to why she was travelling to Nassau with her maid only. Margaret, who had been present at Clare's wedding, had never seen her since, until to-day. She had heard the companion of Lady Wiltshire spoken of a number of times, generally in a joking way, but had paid no particular attention to what she had heard. She now said that, had she seen her before, she would have discovered her identity at once.

Altogether, the events of the day had been such as no one could look at calmly nor without emotion. When, in the course of an hour, the *Kinet-el-Nil*

reached Elephantine, the boat carrying the body of Katherine had already arrived. The Wiltshires insisted upon the ladies remaining over night on their boat, and with the exception of Sir John, the men all went over to the *Anmon-Ra*. Jack was in a raging fever and the doctor was summoned from the little hotel. He looked very grave and pronounced the trouble in all probability the beginning of brain fever. He ordered ice from the Cook tourist steamer, just in from Cairo, and directed that it should be kept on the patient's head constantly. He also enjoined absolute quiet. It was impossible, he said, to tell as yet exactly what the trouble might be, but, from the history of the case, his prognosis must be serious. At any rate, convalescence would be slow. He would come again in the morning and bring the doctor of the Cook boat with him. Haswell and Van Beuren were entrusted with the sad duty of cabling to Mr. and Mrs. Lowden, Katherine's parents in New York. They also made arrangements for a funeral service for the following day, as it seemed necessary that the burial should take place at Assouan. The body could subsequently be removed to America if deemed advisable. A court of enquiry was at once formed to look into the accident. The agent of the Cook boats at Assouan was extremely anxious to sift the matter. The two old cataract reis were also anxious to prove contributory negligence on the part of the victim.

And so a deep gloom fell upon the erstwhile merry party! None of the ladies could sleep that night, though Lady Wiltshire had given all of them doses of bromide from her private medicine chest. This kind-hearted lady felt most keenly for her dear child, Clare. She sat in her dainty cabin, and holding her hand and smoothing her soft hair, wondered if she should soon lose her. She, childless, loved Clare as she would have loved her own daughter.

Clare could say nothing at first. She lay quite still in her little bed, and she would pass her hand now and then over her face, as if to be sure of her own identity, to find whether *she* lay there and not some strange being with her body.

Finally, in a low, almost frightened whisper, as if fearing a negative answer, she asked:

"Is it really so, Mother?"

"Yes, dearest, it is really so. Now remember that I say that it is all really so, and you must try to sleep."

With a sigh of contentment, the tired eyes closed, and in a few moments the regular respirations told Lady Wiltshire that Clare was sleeping, so turning down the lamp she noiselessly closed the door and rejoined the two ladies in the main saloon.

"Clare is sleeping," she said, "and I am going to let her sleep as long as she will. Now, Miss Jones, won't you tell me more about Clare's early life and

her marriage? I am, as you may suppose, deeply interested."

So Margaret went back to Jack's courtship and marriage, told of Mrs. Lawrence, whom she believed had died since their departure from America, told how ideal a marriage it had been considered at the time, and what a noble fellow Jack Oswald was. Then, without any particulars suggesting scandal, how Mrs. Oswald had been obliged to take a trip to the Bahamas for her health, how Jack had put her in charge of friends, expecting to follow shortly, when his business would permit. She told of the wreck, and how nothing had ever been heard of Mrs. Oswald or four of the crew.

Then she told of Jack's somewhat sudden marriage five years after, and she added that it had not been an entirely happy venture, she was afraid. Margaret had tried to put the whole story in a few comprehensive words.

"Margaret, we must cable home, all of us, I think," said Sister Anne. "The papers will have this horrible accident at once, and I am sure our parents will feel easier to hear direct from us."

"Yes, we must talk to the men about that."

Just then Sir John came in and said to his wife :

"I have telegraphed to Cairo, and have arranged to keep the boat two weeks over our time, my dear; the doctor says that it would be very dangerous to move Mr. Oswald for a week. I have also had a long talk with the gentlemen of the *Ammon-*

Ra, and, when it is thought advisable to start, we will go at the same time and keep together down the river. In this way we can divide our forces, and you ladies can be more together, and we must all try to be cheerful and help one another. How is Clare doing?"

"She is sleeping quietly, John, and I am not going to disturb her."

On the following afternoon the burial service of the English church was read with solemnity by Sir John in the saloon of the *Ammon-Ra*. All were present, with the exception of Lady Wiltshire, Clare and Jack. Then followed a sad procession of boats to the other side, below the town, and finally, all that remained on earth of Katherine Oswald was taken to the little enclosure, and, after the reading of the committal service, she was placed there, beneath the yellow sands and under a mimosa tree, whose feathery foliage made the sun fleck the ground with little spots of brightness.

A temporary white wooden cross was set up to mark the spot, and then the party returned sadly to their boats, where Margaret and Sister Anne were busy together for some time marking and packing away the dead girl's belongings.

Fortunately, the ever-present anxiety over the two patients occupied their minds so as to dim for a time the horrors of poor Katherine's tragedy. The two doctors had held a consultation, but it was a very non-committal bulletin which they issued.

Jack's fever was not so high, but his delirium was still present and he was doing as well as could be expected. Lady Wiltshire was the self-constituted nurse in Clare's case, and her report was more favourable. Clare was quite calm and rational, had taken nourishment willingly, and had wished to talk, but had been prevented with the promise that, if she continued to improve, she might sit up and ask questions in a few days.

"I do not propose to have her excite herself or become excited until I feel that she can without danger bear what she must soon hear. As she is now, she leaves nothing to be desired."

"You are quite right, my dear," said Sir John, "and I can only say to the rest of you, who do not know my wife as I do, that you can find no better nurse nor physician than she this side of Cairo."

"I can readily believe that, Sir John," said Van Beuren, "and I can imagine that it might be a real pleasure to be ill, with such a nurse to care for one."

"That was most gallant, Van," said Haswell, "and I assure you, Lady Wiltshire, that Mr. Van Beuren is a man of few words, and what he says he means."

"It is very kind of him, I am sure," replied Lady Wiltshire.

The doctor, on the following morning, found Jack much improved. His fever had abated and his pulse was stronger. His mind was still very cloudy, but he no longer needed constant watching. For two days he had been in a violent delirium, and it had

been necessary to restrain him a number of times for fear that he might do violence to himself or those about him. . . .

A week had passed away since the fatal accident of El Shelal. Jack Oswald was decidedly better, and the outlook was bright now for a quick recovery. He had, as yet, seen no one but Van Beuren, Haswell and Billie, who took turns in watching him and in giving him his medicine and nourishment. This latter had been of the simplest nature, and even this he had at first refused; he had therefore become quite weak and emaciated. He was not allowed to talk, but when he insisted on doing so, his sentences were short, disjointed and devoid of coherent reasoning. Each day, however, showed improvement, and the doctor, after the eighth day, had told Sir John and Haswell that it would now be safe for them to start on their homeward journey in the way previously suggested. One day, more than a week after the disaster, Lady Wiltshire was sitting in her own room with Clare, who had for the first time been allowed to leave her cabin. She sat in an easy chair, prettily dressed in a soft Japanese Kimono, with her fair head resting on the pillow. The day was warm and the windows were open, admitting the dry desert air, which played all kind of pranks with her loosely tied, wavy hair. She sat looking dreamily out over the waters, watching the goolah or grain-laden boats floating down the river or trying to make their slow headway against the stream.

Lady Wiltshire, though pretending to work at her embroidery, watched unnoticed, with sad eyes, the sweet face opposite.

Finally Clare turned her head toward her friend and said :

“ May I ask you something, Mother ? ”

“ Yes, dear, but don't speak of painful things. I do not want my girl to become excited, you know.”

“ I will be very good and stop when you wish me to. I wish to know how *he* is.”

“ He is doing splendidly, dear. Every day shows improvement.”

“ Has he asked for me ? ”

“ Yes, dear ; that is, he talks of you all the time, but you know he has been very ill and delirious with fever, but the fever is gone, and he begins to be rational again, but it will be some time before he can see any one but his nurses.”

“ How glad I am. You know I love him very dearly, Mother. It is all so like a dream, but I can see him now as he jumped bravely in. Tell me, Mother, did he save her ? ”

“ No, dear, he could not save her.”

“ Then she is dead ! Oh, how dreadful ! Poor thing ! Do you know who she was ? ”

“ Yes, dear, but I think you had better not talk any more, until you are a little stronger.”

“ Yes, I know, dear, but I have had such a strange dream, and—but I will be good, and you will tell me all about it to-morrow, won't you ? ”

"Yes, dear, if you will get very strong."

"And I want to see Mr. Van Beuren and Mr. Haswell and Miss Jones; I used to know them all long ago, long, long ago it seems. How strange it all is! I have been in a long sleep, have I not?"

"Now, Clare, you are not being good, and I have a good mind to punish you by not allowing you to have the quail I ordered for your dinner. In a very few days I shall hope you may be able to join us all on deck and everywhere."

"Oh, that will be fine! I am feeling almost happy now."

"Dear little Clare," and Lady Wiltshire kissed her tenderly. . . .

"Didn't I tell you there was some great mystery about it all," said Villiers to Annersley one evening.

"Yes, you did, but, *Mon Dieu*, who could have thought of this! It's one of those unheard-of cases, and they tell me she was Oswald's wife five years ago."

"There is a great deal that I don't understand yet, perhaps never will, but as you say, it is a romantic tragedy as it stands."

"Hard thing to say, but it looks as if it were lucky that the other was lost."

"Yes, if this recognition had taken place without the tragic ending, where and what would have been *her* position?"

"It is incredible! I never would have believed it if it hadn't happened under our eyes."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FEW days had passed since the conversation between Clare and Lady Wiltshire. They had been floating down the river now for nearly a week. The boats made slow progress. When the boatmen rowed with their long clumsy sweeps, they could make four or five miles an hour, but when they stopped, the dahabeahs would swing around and float sidewise or with stern foremost. They prayed for a southerly breeze, but in vain. The day came when it had been promised that Clare should go on deck and meet the *Ammon-Ra* people. She felt quite strong now, and when they had arranged a chair for her with lots of pillows, in one corner of the canopied deck, Sir John went below to escort her up. All from the *Ammon-Ra*, the two ladies, with Van Beuren, Haswell and Billie, had come over from their boat, which was floating down near the *Kinet-el-Nil*.

It had been agreed that they should be as jolly as they could, and to make no reference to the accident. Billie had brought his guitar, and was playing some old plantation melodies, as Sir John, with Clare on his arm, appeared. Clare was dressed in a pretty white sailor costume, with white sailor hat, and she looked quite like the Clare Oswald of

five years ago to Van Beuren, as he stepped forward to greet her.

"Why, Mrs. Oswald, I am delighted to see you again ; you have changed very little."

"Thank you, Mr. Van Beuren," said Clare, as she grasped the proffered hand ; "how delightful to meet again, and there are Mr. Haswell and Miss Jones."

Billie and Sister Anne were presented. Clare remembered having seen them in New York, but had never known them in the old days.

The excitement of it all had given Clare a pretty colour, and her bright, happy eyes showed a keen enjoyment at the meeting of her old friends. They sat and chatted for a half hour about the old days in New York, but no reference was made to Jack or Katherine, and another day passed without Clare's knowing that her husband had made a second marriage. This was in accordance, first with the firm request of Lady Wiltshire to Clare, who had promised to ask no questions about the past, and secondly, in accordance with the request of Sir John to his guests before Clare's appearance.

Jack lay in his cabin below at the time, talking with Annersley, to whom he had taken a great fancy. He was so far recovered that, barring his great weakness, he was quite himself again. He had been allowed to see all the men of the party, and now he was telling young Annersley about Clare and his marriage, and her strange disappear-

ance. Jack had already been told by Van the story in all its details of the finding of Clare in the open boat.

Jack was happy, very happy. He could not help it. He put aside the gloomy part of the picture. He had for days been begging that he might see Clare, and had been promised that it would be very soon. Annersley told him how well she was, and that they were holding a great reception on deck at the time. Jack was delighted.

"Isn't she a magnificent woman, Annersley?"

"Yes, indeed, Oswald; you are a very lucky man to have a wife like Mrs. Oswald, and, by the way, I think both Villiers and I were more than half in love with her, so your popping up, as you did, may have saved bloodshed."

Just then Van Beuren appeared and told Annersley that he was wanted on deck, so the old friends were left together for a time. After a little desultory talk Van said:

"Oh, Jack, I want to say something to you before you see Clare."

"Well, what is it?"

"You know she is, up to this time, ignorant of the fact that you married again."

"I have thought of that, Van," answered Jack in a troubled voice, "and want to ask you what you advise about it."

"It will certainly be a great shock, Jack, but if she is told in the right way, she will see it rightly.

Sir John thinks that I should tell her the whole story. I am sure, from my heart, that I want to smooth out this last obstacle to the happy ending of your troubles, but I do not think that I am the best person."

"Yes, you are, dear old boy. Clare has always thought the world of you and you have been our best friend. I will trust you now."

"You must remember, too, Jack, that you will have to be married again, at least it seems so to us, and until then you two are only *fiancée*, as it were."

"I agree to anything," answered Jack after a moment's reflection. "I am in the hands of my friends and shall follow their advice."

"Well, Jack, I will then, as soon as it is deemed advisable, see Clare and have a long talk. It should be done, I think, before you see her again, don't you?"

"Yes, Van, I suppose so, but you must know that I am simply living that the time may come when Clare and I can begin our life again."

"I will talk with her to-day if Lady Wiltshire is willing."

So the friends chatted together, and soon they heard the party on deck breaking up, then Billie appeared to say good-bye to Jack, and Van Beuren left them and went on deck. The latter excused himself from going back to the *Ammon-Ra* with the others, and, on the plea of wanting to see a little more of his friend Oswald, asked Sir John to send

him over later. The balance of the party returned to their boat.

Van Beuren sought Lady Wiltshire and said to her :

"You know, Lady Wiltshire, that we cannot keep them apart much longer, now that Mr. Oswald is so well, and I will, if you have no objection, prepare Mrs. Oswald for her interview, and tell her all that I know of Jack's life since they were separated. This is Sir John's proposal, as you perhaps know."

"Yes, Mr. Van Beuren, I agree with Sir John and you, but I must see Clare first and decide whether to-day is the best time. If you will stop here for a few moments, I will be back directly."

Van went over to where Sir John and Villiers were sitting. They were talking about the relative speed of the *Kinet-el-Nil* and the *Ammon-Ra*. Soon Lady Wiltshire re-appeared and at a signal Van Beuren joined her.

"I think you had better go now and talk to Clare. She is in my room way aft and is expecting you."

Van went below and a pleasant "Come in" answered his knock at the door of Lady Wiltshire's spacious cabin. He began at once.

"Mrs. Oswald, I wish to have a little talk with you before you see Jack again."

"Yes," said Clare, in a little questioning, surprised voice, and feeling that something unpleasant was coming.

"You know that when you parted five years ago, there was some misunderstanding between you, but after you had sailed, this was all cleared up. I myself have proofs that Jack was falsely accused."

"I know," answered Clare quickly, "that it was all a terrible lie; I do not wish any other proof than what my heart tells me now."

"Well, the months and years went by and Jack continued to live an automatic, mechanical kind of an existence. He took no interest in anything. After a long time we, his friends, urged him to marry again."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Clare in a quivering voice; "I have felt it; do not go further, but tell me, did he marry and is she alive?"

"Yes, he did marry, but she is dead. She was drowned in the cataract the other day."

"Good Heavens!" cried Clare, "can this be true?" Clare was gazing with great, wondering eyes at Van Beuren, who hurried on:—

"Yes, and I will, I must say to you at once, that this alliance was a great mistake. She did not love him, and he had lost any affection he may have had for her. He was very unhappy, and we, who had urged him to it, felt all the more keenly for him. I hope and pray that you will see this in the light that I do, and remember that, had you really been lost, and could you have looked back and advised, you would have said: 'If it will make him happier, I hope he will marry again.'"

Van Beuren paused. He felt that he had not said enough, nor put his words in the best shape, but he had been very nervous from the start as to the effect of his announcement. Finally Clare, after sitting for some moments, rose and walked to the window at the side of the stateroom and looked out. Van Beuren saw the great tears roll down her soft cheeks unheeded. A great pity came over him.

"Clare," and he called her by her first name for the first time, "Clare, I know that this is a shock, a very serious shock, to you, but I wish to say that Jack Oswald has always loved you. He worshipped you alive, and cherished your memory when he thought you gone, as something too holy and sacred to be spoken of. He is my most intimate friend, and I assure you, that the mainspring of his existence, since you went from his life, has been his memory of you, and the pure love you gave him."

Clare turned, and with swimming eyes, looked at Van Beuren; then she held out her hand to him. He took it, and holding it said:

"It will be all right, Clare, will it not?"

He felt that if he stayed longer, he, too, would break down, and, as she sank into her seat and with a poor little sob, said:

"Yes, I think so"—he made a bolt for the door and the deck.

In the saloon Lady Wiltshire met him.

"Well, Mr. Van Beuren, how did she take it?"

"Rather hard, I fear, but perhaps, when she has had her cry, she will feel better."

"Poor little bird, what a life she has had, but I believe the clouds have broken and sunshine is struggling through."

"I do, too, Lady Wiltshire. She loves Jack and, though this is a hard blow, I think she will not be the worse for it. I have wondered whether she ought to have been told, but of course she would have known it very soon in any event."

"Is her mother living, Mr. Van Beuren?"

"No, I have heard from America that she died shortly after our departure last fall. I have said to Haswell that it might be dangerous to tell Clare of this at present. Mrs. Lawrence has been a confirmed invalid for some years, in fact, ever since her daughter disappeared, with heart trouble or something of the sort, and I am now in great doubt as to what to do. Clare has a number of near relatives, however, and I shall urge Mr. Haswell to communicate with them and tell them, or perhaps wait until he returns. In short, I am in a quandary."

"It is a difficult question. One of the first things Clare asked me was about her mother, and I told her I would find out about her as soon as I could, and that she must be prepared to hear anything, but just now we must think only of those near and dear to us and who need our attention."

Van told Lady Wiltshire, in a few words, what

he had said to Clare and, after he had left the boat, she went in to see her. She found her curled up in her chair asleep, so she threw a light wrap over her and left her there.

Clare had expected to come to dinner for the first time that evening, but when she awoke she was so unstrung that Lady Wiltshire thought she had better take her meal in her stateroom, where she was. There the two had their dinner together, and Lady Wiltshire made Clare laugh more than once, by telling her stories of her quaint experiences in China and Japan.

On the following day, Clare and Lady Wiltshire had a long talk, the result of which was, that Clare was to be allowed to see Jack. Lady Wiltshire also took the opportunity of telling Clare of her mother's death. Clare received the news calmly, though she cried a little as she told her benefactress what a devoted and unselfish mother Mrs. Lawrence had been. She said :

"This has changed it all. Before I saw Mr. Van Beuren I thought I was Jack's wife, but now I cannot feel that I am, and, though I love him as well as ever, yet this terrible shadow will always come between us and I feel that by and by we must be married again." . . . Three weeks later, the *Ammon-Ra* and *Kinet-el-Nil* spent the night at Assiut. They had scarcely made fast to the shore, when a tall, handsome man, guided by an Arab Effendi, was seen descending the steep bank toward the

boats. The two dahabeahs were tied up side by side, and all were on deck. Jack and Clare were engrossed in a game of backgammon, and, as Annersley, looking over the rail, called out :

“What a good-looking chap that is coming down to the boat; he doesn’t look like one of Cook’s agents,” Jack looked over the side, and then, leaping to his feet, and scattering the men hopelessly over the board, called out :

“Hello, Ernest, you dear old boy. How are you?”

“Hello, Jack. By Jove! How well you are looking.”

A moment later the friends were embracing each other with great fervor. Meanwhile Clare had gone below to allow the old friends a few moments alone.

“Why, where did you drop from, Ernest?” asked Haswell.

“I came up from Cairo by train to meet you, and if I am invited, will sail back with you,” answered Balford.

“Do you want a written invitation?” asked Jack.

“No, word of mouth will do, if I have witnesses.”

“Then you are one of us,” said Haswell.

That night they had a very jolly dinner. Probably, during the meal, each one gave a thought to the little yellow grave under the mimosa tree, way off at Assouan, but the human heart and mind are easily diverted from pain, and their present happiness obscured all else for the time being. Only

afterwards when Balford, Van Beuren and Billie sat alone, was the subject brought up and the details of the tragedy repeated. . . .

In ten days they were all in Cairo. On the way down from Assiut, Haswell had urged the English party to become his guests on the *Ailsa* from Alexandria to Brindisi, and they had accepted. Balford had agreed to return to New York via Europe with the Clintons. The Carter party had returned to Cairo, and had gone on to Palestine, but letters left at Cook & Son's for the *Ammon-Ra* party contained the information that they would all meet somewhere in Europe. Dr. Van Rennsalaer had written a congratulatory letter to Margaret, in which he stigmatized Billie as a very lucky devil. . . .

On the morning of the twenty-eighth of March, the *Ailsa*, which had been completely overhauled, sailed away from Egypt bearing a very contented party. Five days later they passed into the landlocked harbour of Brindisi. Here the party broke up. Sir John and Lady Wiltshire, Annersley and Villiers, Jack and Clare, went direct to London by the transcontinental mail.

It had been arranged that Jack and Clare should be quietly married, early in April, in the little chapel at Chippenham, and sail at once for America. Billie and Margaret were to be married after they had returned to New York and had received parental sanction. The *Ailsa* was to work around to Southampton, where the party would leave her and return

by the American Line. Jack and Clare would try to join them on the same boat. . . .

The bell of the little brown church at Rye on Long Island Sound was clanging out its noisy welcome. It was the first day of June. The train had just pulled out of the pretty station, and a stream of well-dressed people were walking down the platform. They all seemed to be acquainted. As they got into the smart-looking traps waiting for them, Van Beuren hurried up, gorgeous in frock coat and high hat, and there were many handshakings and greetings.

"It's only a little way ; you can walk if you please. That's the bell of the little church you hear. It's not much bigger than a toy house, just the place for Margaret and Billie to be married in."

The air was redolent with the perfume of lilacs, and, as they passed, they caught glimpses of the bright green lawns and pretty summer residences. As they drove up to the church entrance, the happy bridegroom rushed forward and greeted them and helped Clare to alight.

"It's very unconventional, I know," he said, "but I couldn't help it, and I know Margaret won't blame me." . . .

An hour later, they were all wishing the newly made couple all manner of good things, and the Jones' country place resounded with the laughter of a hundred voices. Dr. Van confessed to the bride that he would never recover from the shock

received upon first hearing of the engagement, and, upon Billie's assuring him that there were just as good fish in the sea as had ever been taken out of it, he answered, very gallantly, that he didn't believe it. . . .

As Jack sat that evening on the spacious verandah of their cottage at Rockaway, Clare came over to him. She was dressed in a simple white lawn, with just a bit of colour at the neck and waist. She sat for a moment on the arm of his chair. The wealth of honeysuckle behind made a fitting background for the picture. She looked down into his eyes. He had laid aside his paper, and leaning his head back, looked into hers with a gaze of perfect content.

THE END.

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